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The
Rollright Stones;
The Stonehenge
of Oxfordshire.

With some account of the Ancient Druids,
and Sagas rendered into English.



Henry W. Jaunt, F.R.S.

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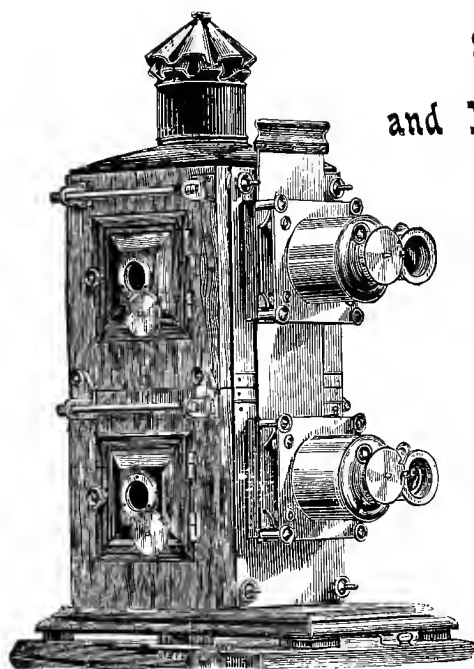
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Rollright. The Circle from South.

The
Rollright Stones;
The Stonehenge
of Oxfordshire.

With some account of the Ancient Druids,
and Sagas rendered into English.



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The best of thanks is rendered by the Author to his many kind friends, who by their information and assistance have materially contributed to the successful completion of this little work. To Dr. A. J. Evans, F.S.A. Keeper of the Ashmolean, to Mr. James Parker, to the Librarian and Assistants at the Bodleian and to Mr. Herbert Hurst among many others, a debt of kindnesses is here very gratefully acknowledged.

THE ROLLRIGHT STONES



THE STONEHENGE OF OXFORDSHIRE.

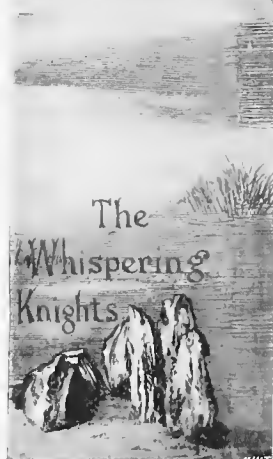
Chapter I. [Introductory.]

A relie hoar of very ancient time,
Of days so long ago, that e'en
Its very origin is now in myst'ry lost,
Yet in tradition's oft told tale
There's many a worthy truth enshrined,
Half hid and dull, like Rubies' fire,
When from the cov'ring clods of earth disclosed.



ABOUT three miles nearly due north of the old market town of Chipping Norton, on the very summit of the table land of the hills, along which runs what was once an ancient British road, stand the Rollright Stones, the Stonehenge of Oxfordshire.

The idea of the form and arrangement of the Stones can at once be grasped from the picture above reproduced, from Dr. Plot's Oxfordshire, where



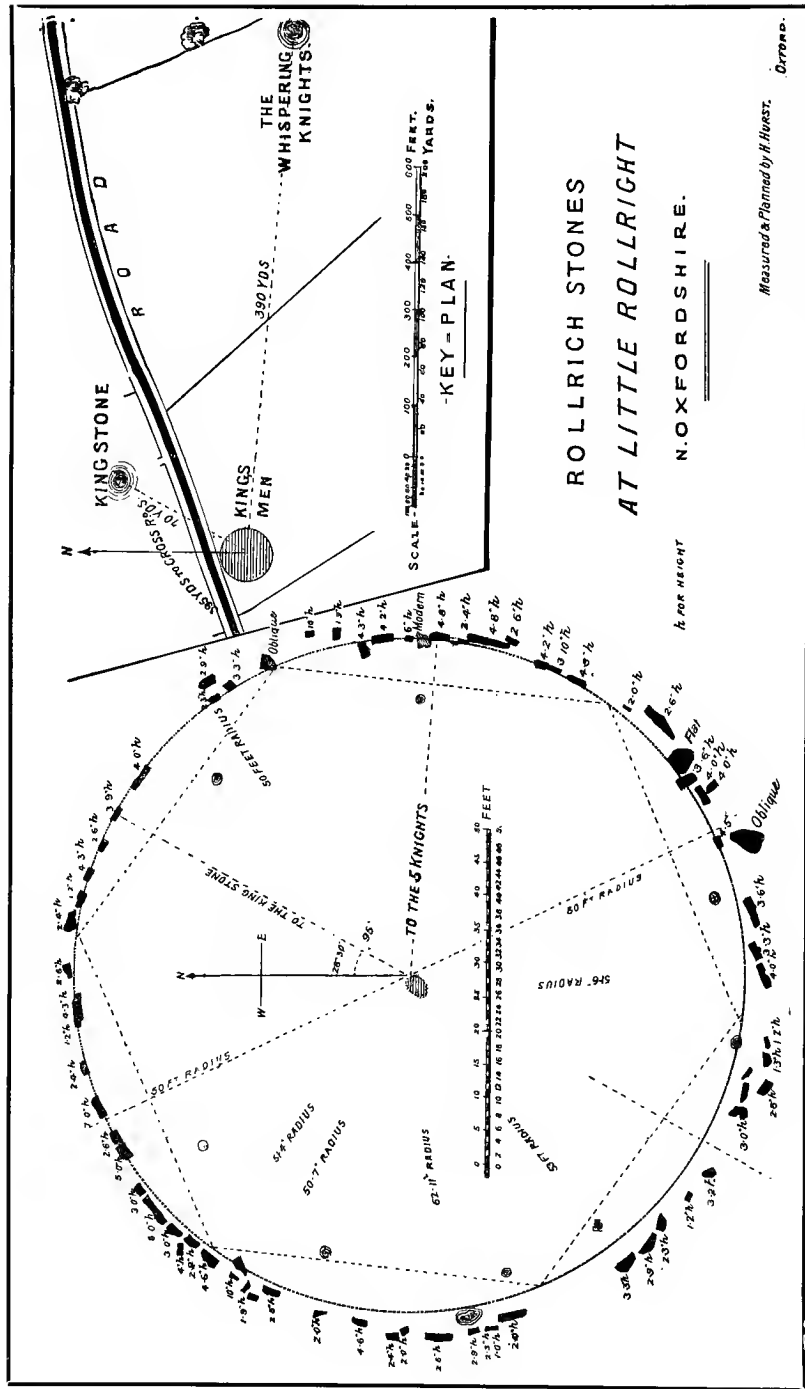
it will be seen that they consist of (1) a Circle of Stones, close by the southern side of the road ; (2) a single Stone, called "The King's Stone" on a long mound, some 70 yards to the north east on the further side of the road and hedge ; and (3) another group of five large Stones, known as "The Whispering Knights," about 390 yards to the eastward of the Circle in the field below.

The Key plan on the next page will also give a general idea of the position of the various groups, while the larger plan of the Circle tells its own story, with the position and heights of the various stones of which it is composed. The stones, being wisely placed under the Act of Parliament for the preservation of ancient monuments, are enclosed in a protective fence of iron railings, the key of which is kept at the first cottage about 400 yards west of the Circle. There is no charge for admittance.

The setting up of Stones for memorial and sacrificial purposes takes us a long way back in the history of the world ; or rather perhaps, in that of the Jewish race ; whose records in Holy Writ have preserved many an instance to us. The earliest appears to be that of Jacob (Gen. xxviii) who when on his journey to Padan-Aram in search of a bride used a stone as his pillow. He was blessed in a dream, and next morning took the stone he had used for his pillow, set it up for a pillar and poured oil upon the top of it. Then again in Exodus xxiv—4, 5. "And Moses..... rose up early in the morning and builded an altar under the hill and twelve pillars..... And he sent young men of the children of Israel, which offered burnt offerings, and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen unto the Lord." And another occasion we find recorded in the fourth chapter of the book of Joshua, where the Children of Israel when passing dry shod over Jordan, were instructed by Joshua to "Take twelve men out of the people, out of every tribe a man, and command them to take out of the midst of Jordan, where the Priest's feet stood firm, twelve stones ; carry them with you and leave them in the lodging place where ye shall lodge this night.....That this may be a sign among you.....And these stones shall be a memorial unto the children of Israel for ever.....And those twelve stones which they took out of Jordan, did Joshua pitch in Gilgal..... Wherefore the place is called Gilgal unto this day." The word Gilgal, is explained in the marginal notes of our bible as *rolling* and it is thus added, that the place was so called because God *rolled* away the reproach of Egypt. But the word Gilgal (Isaiah xxviii—28) is also interpreted a wheel, and with this meaning it naturally suggests itself, that the stones which Joshua had brought out of Jordan and 'pitched' were stood up in a *circular* form like a wheel.

From passages in the later chapters of Joshua and other places, it appears that this Gilgal became one of the chief places of assembly for the Children of Israel, and was consecrated, or set apart, for the

From "The Rollright Stones and their Folk Lore," by Dr. A. J. Evans, F.S.A.



purpose of the gathering of the tribes, upon any proceedings of importance. In 1 Samuel xi—15 we find "that all the people went to Gilgal; and there they made Saul king before the Lord in Gilgal; and there they sacrificed sacrifices of peace offerings; and there Saul and the men of Israel rejoiced."

There is no doubt that the putting up of Stones, Altars, and Circles of Stones was a universal custom, and we have a large number of instances. We have named these Rollright Stones "The Stonehenge of Oxfordshire," from the fact that in form and size of the Circle, it resembles in many ways the greater and more majestic circle of stones in Wiltshire, called Stonehenge, which, although one of the most important of the English remains of this character, is by no means the only one. Even in Oxfordshire, on the southern side of the Forest of Wychwood, which may probably, at an early period, have reached to Rollright itself; there are three large stones pitched near the village of Stanton Harcourt, called "The Devil's Coits" (from the local legend that his Satanic Majesty pitched them from Cumnor Hurst, a hill a mile or two away, and won the Man's soul, with whom he played, as the stake) which are supposed to be the few remains of a large Circle which once existed there; and an early British village and burial ground was, a few years ago, excavated not far from the spot where they still stand.

Stonehenge is, beyond all others remaining in Britain the Circle most impressive in its majesty and grandeur, with its enormous upright stones—far greater than Rollright—and the large capping stones resting on the top of them, so as to form a continuous circle around the summit; a second inner circle of smaller stones, then others again within these, and added to all this, the great antiquity, the awful mystery, which hangs around its origin. But Rollright is probably even earlier than Stonehenge and its stones are pitched in a far ruder manner, they bear no trace of being squared up, and there are no mortices or tenons; although in its size and arrangement it has the same general features: the position and orientation of the "King Stone" at Rollright for instance, answers to the stone called the "Friars Heel" at Stonehenge, and to an observer in the centre of each circle the sun rises above them on the morning of the Summer solstice. (June 21.)*

Stonehenge also, in its wrought stones, exhibits signs of a later and more enlightened date, just as in buildings, particularly in those of early periods, we find the later development of a style shows more character as time proceeds. Thus, while there is perhaps only one single evidence of a tool mark on any of the Rollright Stones,

* At Darab in Persia where is a Circle, there is also a single large upright stone at some little distance from the main group.

each one with one exception being entirely in its natural shape ; those at Stonehenge, immense as they are, nearly all bear marks of being worked upon in many ways.

Then there is the great Circle at Avebury, also in Wiltshire, some 1,400 feet in diameter, which encloses the whole village, and has the remains of two smaller circles within the large one. This, if complete, would actually dwarf Stonehenge, as well as every other Circle in England, by its enormous size ; but the village being built within it, hides its extent, and hundreds of the stones of which it was composed have been removed, as they were looked upon and used as a quarry for every purpose. Besides the centre circles, Avebury had two long avenues of stones springing from it or leading up to it, somewhat similar to the avenue of Sphinxes at Karnac, and the puzzling avenues of early Thibetian temples, but of these few stones now remain *in situ*.

But even Avebury and Stonehenge large as they are, are dwarfed by the great remains of Carnac in Brittany, which are infinitely more extensive than Stonehenge, but of ruder formation, the stones are much broken, dilapidated and displaced. They consist of eleven rows of unwrought masses of rock merely set upon end in the earth, without cross pieces or anything on the top. The stones are of great thickness but the highest of them does not exceed eighteen feet, they are placed in rows about 15 to 18 paces apart and run in rather a semicircular direction for over a mile. There are still, we are told, some 2,000 remaining, and at Erdeven, near by, over another 1,000 stones, so when the vast monuments were complete their immensity must have been overpowering.

There are other Circles at Stanton Drew, in Somersetshire ; in the Isle of Mull ; one found in Jersey was removed from thence and re-erected at Park Place, near Henley-on-Thames ; another called 'The Three Hurlers,' which consists of three Circles, is in Cornwall, which county also contains "The Merry Maidens" and others ; while "The Greyweathers" in Devonshire, "The Gidley or Giddy Circle" and others near Merivale Bridge on Dartmoor ; "The Nine Ladies" on Stanton Moor, Derbyshire ; "Long Meg and her Daughters" at Penrith ; "The Keswick Circle," "Arbor Lowe," Derbyshire ; those at Addington, Kent ; and in many other places throughout our islands where are remains of Circles more or less complete. In India and the East are others ; throughout Europe they are to be found. Circles are frequent in Algeria, but in France only in the north and north west departments ; in Denmark and Sweden they are both numerous and important, but in the British Isles they attain their greatest development. In North America, Hodson mentions three, one of which on a high rock on the banks of the Winnipeg, the Indians were accustomed to crown with wreaths of herbage and branches. It is most probable that having their origin in Oriental imagery,

as the trend of civilization advanced westward, the peoples who advanced with it erected these Circles, when they occupied and settled down in the various counties into which they entered.

As we have already noticed, they are partly secular and partly sacred, but their sacred character predominated above the others, when the knowledge of nations was mainly centred in the priestly caste. The worship of the Sun dates from the earliest times, the adoration of the beneficent luminary, to whom the ancient peoples of the world owed so much, was nearly universal; and the earliest Temples, before the time of Zoroaster some 800 years before the Christian era, seem to have been entirely open to the sky, as the worshippers of that early age regarded as impious the idea of confining the Deity, whose Temple is Earth and Sky, within an enclosure however imposing and magnificent. One of the objects of these great monuments, generally speaking, was to impress upon the minds of those who visited them, whether as worshippers or otherwise, an idea of the infinite; and even to the present day, there is a certain feeling of awe when alone within their precincts; we still pay an amount of respect to the associations which surround them. All the circles have outlived even traditional history, thus proving their great antiquity, and no one is able to assign the date with any approach to accuracy, to any one of them.

The only way of getting near it, would be by taking the orientation of the King-stone in respect to the Circle; this seems to indicate at Rollright that the date of erection would be approximately 1,500 to 2,000 years B.C., perhaps earlier. This was an age when men had only implements of stone and bone and were ignorant of the use of metal. No tool seems to have been used on the stones either to shape them in any way or to fit them together; even where as at the Whispering Knights one of the stones capped the others. Yet the King-stone is undoubtedly oriented to the rising sun at the June solstice, showing some knowledge of the heavenly bodies. The architectural idea that these stone-men best understood was the power of a mass. They everywhere sought to give dignity and expression by using the largest blocks they could get.

Solomon's Temple was oriented to the east, as were many of the Egyptian temples; as the sun rose, its rays at the equinox would shine straight into the Holy of Holies, at which time, the High priest entered, once a year, to sacrifice; and reflecting from a jewel which the priest bore on his shoulder, he could be seen by even the most remote of the worshippers. Josephus states that the miraculous sheen of the jewels ceased, God having been displeased; but this can also be astronomically explained by the alteration of the orientation.

That Rollright was also a Sun Temple there is little doubt. The worship of the Planets arose in Chaldea, and from thence

pervaded Egypt and spread far and wide. The Sun and Moon were the deities spoken of in Holy Writ under the name of Baal and Ashtaroth; and these also gave the names to the first two days of the week, which we still call Sunday and Monday. The Sun was worshipped as the Creator and Preserver, a Northern people would look upon the Sun as a beneficent deity, although to a tropical race it would mean drought and destruction. According to the Manichæans, Christ dwelt in the Sun, came from thence to sojourn upon earth, and afterwards returned there.

Sun Temples were erected on the top of hills, it was Mount Carmel where Elijah called the priests of Baal to their altar, and the prophets of the Groves; when he worked the miracle of fire, and overthrew the priests of Baal after their failure to light their altar fire, and that they were open places surrounded by groves, seems to have every confirmation, ('They built them High places and Images, and Groves on every high hill, and under every green tree.' 1. Kings xiv.) and we find the same idea carried out by the Druids in Britain.

These Circles were also places of Judgement or Assembly; they are called Motes or Things among the Northern nations of Europe. We read how Joshua called the Children of Israel together to Gilgal, and Cæsar tells us how the Druids assembled at a fixed period of the year in a consecrated place in the territories of the Carnutes, round Orleans; where those who had disputes, submitted the case to the Druids. The travelling of Samuel also to Bethel, Gilgal &c., every year to judge Israel; is an exact prototype of the Druids meeting in the centre of Gaul, to judge the people.

Then again, when a King or Chief was chosen, this would be the place of meeting, as Gilgal was when Saul was made King of Israel by Samuel; and the Arch Druid, answering to the High Priest in those days, would be the chief actor in the solemn ceremony. We have no record of any King being crowned at Rollright, but at Kingston-on-Thames, at the lower end of the Market Place is preserved the Stone on which no less than seven or eight Saxon Kings of England were crowned, and even to this day, our Kings are crowned on the Stone of Destiny in Westminster Abbey, which stone is stated to be the very stone which Jacob used for his pillow when on his journey to Padan-aram.

Fergusson makes all these Circles simple memorials of battles; in the case of Rollright bringing in the name of Rollo as the hero of the fight at Hook Norton, but Rollright stands at the centre point of two battles, each about five miles distant; the other taking place according to traditional history, between Edmund Ironside and the Danes, round the neighbourhood of the Shiere-stone on the road to Moreton, which is said to be its memorial. The King-stone would mark the burial place of some slain King, and

the Whispering Knights a *kist-vaen* or stone chest, a sepulchral monument to his Knights; and the date of the erection to be 901-923 in the reign of Eadwerd. But we have the Saxon Chronicle to rely upon at this date, and no death of any great man is there recorded, and although in 905 mention is made of the Danes over-running Mercia, there is no record which would account for Rollright. In 917 came the slaughter at Hockerton, (Hook Norton) but still no King or eminent men are mentioned as having fallen in this fight, and there is a record of the place older than this date, so even if some circles are memorials of British battles, Rollright seems to possess evidence of greater antiquity.

They are traditionally called 'Druidic' circles, but we have no records that that were erected by the Druids of Britain or under their directions. There is no mention that we can find of the circle being a prominent feature of Druidic ceremonies; although there is little doubt that in later British times, the Druids were the priestly class and held nearly exclusive sway in all public assemblies, whether religious or political. The Druids worshipped in Groves mostly, according to all the records respecting them; and these circles were more probably temples of the earlier race, before Druidism had won its sway over the people, or had risen to the eminence it afterwards gained in Julius Cæsar's time.

One of the latest theories respecting these Circles, is that they were erected by a tribe, who traversing North Africa and making their way via Spain, France, and Brittany, pushed onward by other tribes, eventually made their home in Britain; while another branch of the same tribe erected the Circles of Northern Europe. This coincides partly with the record mentioned in our chapter on the Druids, but in that record, the tribe traversed Europe. The earlier race that peopled Britain seems to be forgotten by those who ascribe the circles to the Druids, but there are only traditional records respecting this people, and scarcely that, the only remains are their burial places. They seem to have been a dwarf race with long head and oval face; dark skin, eyes, and hair; and to have known little or nothing of metals; flint weapons and tools being all they had to supply their needs. Even the name by which they were known is lost, and whether the Silures of Wales, the Iberians of Spain or the Ibernians of Ireland belong to this very early race or represent it, remains to be sought out. That they made their way from the east bringing certain oriental traditions with them, of which these curious stone circles was one; is all that can with certainty be traced.

The fact also of these circles being oriented to the Sun is beyond dispute, the same features being observable at Stonehenge and Rollright, as well as other places; and from this some conclude they were erected merely for purposes of astronomy; this may

partly have been so, but their principal purpose was no doubt that of a temple in which the Sun was the chief deity.

We thus place before our readers the various theories which have been raised respecting this remarkable monument, the solution to which is most possibly to be found in a combination of several, or even in the whole of them.

Far up upon the hill-top, away from haunts of men,
These massive stones were rear'd, but no one knoweth when ;
A vast and open temple, a worship'd sun-lit shrine,
A gath'ring place of nations, when they in might combine.




ROLLRIGHT STONES, THE NORTH PART OF THE CIRCLE

Chapter II.

How to get to the Rollright Stones.

Via Chipping Norton. Via Addlestrop. Via Moreton-in-the-Marsh.
Via Banbury. and Via Hook Norton.

‘Ever onward, ever upward, as should be our way of life.’

HE Rollright Stones being on the summit of the hills away from near railway stations, have to be reached by motor, cycle, driving, or by the still older mode of progression by man, humourously termed ‘Shanks’ Pony’ and on a bright fine spring day, any one of these methods, even the last named, has charms as unexpected as they are delightful. The Great Western with its branches serve the district, having stations at Chipping Norton Town $3\frac{1}{2}$ miles from the Stones, Chipping Norton Junction 7 miles, Addlestrop a short 5 miles, Hook Norton $5\frac{1}{2}$ miles, and Moreton-in-the-Marsh about 7 miles.

Cyclists or Motorists will find the lime-stone roads somewhat rough, particularly early in the year, as the stone of the district with which they are made, ‘gives’ considerably in wet weather and dries after rain into ridges; but this in summer wears down on the main road, and is then of little consequence. But there is no *flat* road to the Stones from anywhere, the greater part of the 700 feet of height must be surmounted, and up and down hill is the order of going, from every side. The main road from London and Oxford to Stratford-on-Avon and beyond, crosses the British road within a few hundred yards of this ancient monument, and to many Motorists this will be found the most practical and convenient way. Everybody now of course, carries one or the other of the reliable and convenient Ordnance maps, and a glance at this will soon settle the best route to take, or the one most convenient to the visitor himself; all the roads being fairly picturesque, and to those who keep open their eyes, equally interesting.



MARKET PLACE, CHIPPING NORTON.

Via CHIPPING NORTON. The road from the Railway Station rises stiffly up the hill to the Town, through a broad avenue lined with trees until the old part is reached, and then the Town Hall and Market Place is close. If spending an hour or two here, turn to our chapter on Chipping Norton for details; if proceeding, pass along the Market Place and Horse Fair on the upper side of the broad 'place', and leave the town by the left hand road of the three which open at the end of the Horse fair.

Here the way leads along a pleasant road bordered with big Beeches and Sycamores, and after a short distance, suddenly dips into a valley. At the verge of the descent, look across where a pretty view of the Church and the foundation mound of the old Castle is seen in the valley below, with the hills and the village homes of Kingham in the distance. Further by the side of Over Norton Park, the seat of Col. Dawkins, the tree-shaded road is very pleasant, particularly in the bottom where it crosses the little stream, before the sharp ascent to Over Norton village begins.

At the top is a sharp corner by which is a danger-post of the Tourist Club, and then the prettiest peep of Over Norton is in front. Only a grouping of cottages with their flower gardens and the green encircling the old elm, but a real artist's bit for all that, helped by the quaint shelter jutting out from the cottage at the village corner, which shows signs of considerable usage.

Turn again at this, taking the uphill road and the summit is soon reached, then the valley with Little Rollright lies before us with the hill beyond on which the Stones are reared. The onward road is seen, winding up between the green fields, and the site of the stones can be identified by a group of Fir trees, on the extreme top to the right of the road and straight ahead. Then the road descends into the deep valley, passing more than one clump of trees on the right, and a huge stone or two of the same kind as those at Rollright, on the other side of the road.

The descent sharpens as we proceed, and there is at times a nasty gutter for cyclists where our way joins that from the Oxford main road; then down into the valley and under the Railway, but there is nothing noticeable except the little farmhouse of 'Chesill' (Choicehill) half hidden in foliage. A little deep-cut brawling stream, crosses under the road in the bottom; and beyond, another, with a small millpond, a sheep-washing place and a little mill, once the mill of Colde-Norton Priory, whose former demesnes we are crossing. Stone 'hedges' line the road now, and at their end at the bottom of the hill, is a turn to the left through the gate and across the field to Little Rollright.

The way to the Stones is along the road and up the hill, but if you have time, Little Rollright is worth a visit; it has only a farm-house, a Church, and a couple of cottages nearly hidden in the shaded dell below the hill, but is a pretty spot, and pleasant too is the music made in the big rookeries which is one of its features.

Little Rollright has a charming, little, typical village church, with Chancel and Nave and battlemented Western tower of Perp. work, with good windows and tracery. Both Nave and Chancel have open roofs, fairly lofty in their pitch, the pulpit is stone, and there is a stone pillar Font. But the chief attraction is a couple of fine alabaster tombs in the chancel, the first to Edward Dixon and his two wives, 1647. They are represented as kneeling at a triple Prie Dieu with open books, the gentleman in plate armour and wearing a sword, kneeling facing the spectator, and the two ladies kneeling on either side facing each other; the whole beneath a canopy supported by pillars having coats of arms above. On the slab below are outline figures of seven boys and three girls. One of the ladies was a daughter of Whitelocke, President at the trial of Strafford.

The other tomb, within the Chancel rails, is that of William Blower, who built the Tower in 1617. It has a fine reclining figure in full plate armour with sword in front held by his left hand, the head resting partly on the right hand and arm, and on his visor. He lies beneath a canopy standing out from the wall and resting on columns, the whole of which at one time was fully painted. Above the figure are brasses with inscriptions, but the centre brass



Little Rollright, from the Hill.

and the one below on the pedestal are missing. In panels are groups of flowers, an hour glass resting on a skull, a skull in the centre of a scroll below, the corresponding one above being filled with a chernub having wings, on the base and above the canopy are coats of arms.

On either side of the graceful window of the Chancel are pedestals with canopies over the recesses, evidently intended for figures, one of which may have been St. Philip to whom the church is dedicated. In the churchyard is the remains of a cross, and the tomb of Sir John Chandos Read, Bt. of Shipton Court, Oxon, 1868. Years ago the village boasted the fine old manor house of the Blower family, of which now only one ruined window remains in a meadow near the church; on the western side of the Tower is their coat of arms with an inscription.

Now mount the steep hill to the cottages at the cross roads, at the right hand one of which (Mrs. Thornett's) the keys of the enclosure containing the Stones are kept, call, and the lady or her son will accompany the visitor to the stones, and if you want any light refreshment or a cup of tea, you will be able there to procure it. Turn to the right along the British trackway, and in a few moments the fir shaded enclosure containing the Circle will be reached.

Via **ADDLESTROP Station.** To cyclists and pedestrians coming from Worcester or Evesham this may be the most convenient station, and for those making their way from Stow and that direction, this is their road. The railway station is down in the Evenlode valley and the river runs alongside,—which

‘.....lingers in the hills and holds,
A hundred little towns of stone
Forgotten in the Western Wolds,’

Not far from the station is Daylesford, once the home of Warren Hastings, whose remains rest in the tomb at the eastern end of the little church, which has been rebuilt since his time. On the other side of the road, Addlestrop House will be seen among the trees of the park, but the picturesque Chastleton House is too much hidden, and Cornwell House beyond Daylesford can scarcely be made out.

Still the road is pleasant with its belting of trees, and when the hill is surmounted there is a fair road to the “Cross Hands” and onward to the Stones. Notice the handing posts, the side roads on the right all lead to Chipping Norton, and you will find this same peculiarity along this road for miles past Rollright, until Hook Norton in fact is passed; across the verdant valley the little town will be seen topping the opposite hill. Go straight on along this road, until the cottages on the hill above Little Rollright are reached, at the second one of which the Keys are kept, and then in a few moments the stones are reached.

Via MORETON-in-the-MARSH. Moreton station is a convenient one, as more trains stop there than at Addlestrop, and from here also the little tramway runs to Shipton on Stour, partly along the side of the road. The little town of Moreton has not many attractions beyond its broad main street, in the centre of which stands the Town Hall, a graceful modern building; just opposite being an old Bell Turret of quaint appearance, at the corner of the side road. The Church was rebuilt in 1860, so has few old associations, its lofty spire is seen for many miles when looking down a valley in which it stands.

Leave the town by the Chipping Norton Road,—if preferred the town of Moreton can be omitted on going from the station, and in a short two miles the Four-Shire stone is reached. It is a short obelisk marking the point where the counties of Gloucester, Warwick, Worcester and Oxford meet, the names are cut on the sides of the pillar. It is supposed to stand on the site of a battle in which the Danes were defeated by Edmund Ironside. A couple of miles on is the turn (left) to Little Compton which boasts a fine old Manor House once the residence of Archbishop Juxon; but of the Church close by, the only remains of the original structure is the quaint old saddle-back tower. Chastleton House, Church and Village lie a mile down the side road to the right, it is a beautiful old place full of historical reminiscences of the times of the Civil War, and the Church also has a number of interesting features.

The way to the Stones is straight on, without taking either of these turns; the road is a fair one, but the stiff hill has to be breasted, and when the "Cross Hands" is reached turn to the left and traverse the Addlestrop road, (*see ante*) to the Stones.

Via BANBURY. There is nearly a direct road from Banbury to the Stones via Broughton and Tadmarton Heath, in all about 11 miles: or by Bloxham, South Newington, and Swerford, a mile or so further; both are fair up-and-down roads to cyclists, the lower road of the two perhaps being the most picturesque, as Bloxham and Swerford are very pretty. For the latter part of the journey see the next paragraphs.

Via HOOK NORTON. We rather like Hook Norton, for to a stranger it has quite a number of interesting features. Even the journey by rail has a sauce of pleasantness in the Auto Motor, as it is called, which conveys us, and the moment we get out at the station we look over a large track of country, quite different in its features to any other of the routes we have already traversed. Only a short distance from the station are two lofty viaducts, taking the line along to the hill under which it dives, while on the other hand the two large Cupolas of the Brymbo

Company (not the only kilns in the place) tell the story of the iron ore which is here dug out and roasted, before it is sent into North Wales and Staffordshire. Even on our short way to the little town we pass by an iron quarry being dug in the characteristic mode of the district ; first the three feet or so of rich looking red mould is removed from the surface of the field, and deposited on the other side of the Quarry ; then some twelve to twenty feet of ironstone in loose flat nuggets is quarried and carted away, either in ordinary carts with horses, or in small iron trucks along a tramway one at a time ; the motion being obtained from an endless wire cable. This crude ore is sent to the furnaces, there to be hoisted aloft, and shot into their fiery mouths, and as it dries down it emerges again at the bottom, with the earth as powder, and the ironstone dry and free from it ; which latter having lost a third of its weight is then loaded into the larger railway trucks and sent away to the north.

A quaint little place is the village itself, with winding, crooked, up-and-down streets, interlacing each other in the most bewildering way ; it has a fair open space for its High Street or Market Place, whichever it is, and one of the grand class of Oxfordshire Churches, perched right on the top of the hill ; opposite being the neat little Inn, "The Sun."

The Church is worth a visit, if only to look at the curious figures carved round its font, but it has other points of interest as well ; the Chancel is Norman, with windows of that style, the remnants of the Capitals of the old Norman arch are embedded in the wall ; then comes a lofty Chancel arch, above which is a flattened Perp. window, having an ornamented arcade below ; a rood screen once crossed here, but is gone. The Nave is spacious and high, with an arcade to both North and South Aisles, the latter actually exceeding in width the Nave itself ; the tower arch is bold and lofty, but blocked in a curious way by the raised seats and a curtain above. The Font is the gem of the Church. Of round form, it has two complete rings of carving encircling it, and a series of the quaintest figures between. Facing the west is the figure of Aquarius bearing a staff across his shoulder, on which is slung two water-bolges or bouldges, (apart from their use in heraldry, these are nearly the sole representation of a bygone method of water-carriage,) in front, axe in hand, he is holding the staff. Then Sagatarius, as a Centaur with bent bow and arrow ready to shoot, and following round, a tree with six branches, evidently the tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, for the very next figure is that of Eve with long hair and laughing, having an apple in her one hand, while with the other, she is holding a fig leaf in front of her. Next her is a figure of Adam with rake in his hand, and one foot on a spade pressed into the ground, and then comes a



THE FONT, HOOK NORTON CHURCH.

curious entwined compound figure of a serpent and a horse, both ornamented with gems, the serpent is biting the horse's nose. These are followed by a leopard like animal, with tail curved above its back and branched; below being a tree, possibly that of Life.

The exterior of the Church, with the south aisle and its fine Dec. windows faces the road, at the west end being the bold graceful tower of four stories, with corner buttresses surmounted by a parapet; and eight pinnacles set skewways, all of the same height and ending in vanes. The base of the tower is ornamented, the western door deeply sunk and panelled, above being a bold West window of four lights. The church is mainly built of the ironstone of the district. Curfew is rung at 8 am. and mid-day, but on Saturday mid-day, the bells are chimed instead of rung, and the story runs that in the old three bottle times, this was done to let the then vicar know, that the next day was the Sabbath. Hook Norton has a venerable history dating back to

Danish times, but too long to tell here ; someday we may take it up for a little booklet of its own. But it would never do to omit the local joke :—

“ Hook Norton so we all are told,
Is the place where people ne’er grow old,
Has one great charm beside, they say,
There, pigs on organs are taught to play.”

On leaving Hook Norton take the turn to the left after passing the Church, down the hill to the little stream, then rise, again. At the end of a mile the Swerford-Rollright road is reached, here turn to the right. The next two miles are over an undulating road, and at the end of a pitch down-and-up again is Great Rollright. If you are fond of antiquarian beauties stop a moment at the Church as you pass, it has a very fine carved Tympanum to its South Norman door and is generally a most interesting Church. Notice also the line of carved heads beneath the parapet of the South Aisle and the quaint tracery of some of the windows, particularly the one to the west of the porch.

From here a short couple of miles with one half turn to the left will take you to the Stones, the position of which is well marked by the group of firs. Go on the short distance to the cottages at the cross roads, at the first of which the keys of the enclosure are kept.





Rollright. The King=Stone.



ROLLRIGHT, THE KING-STONE.

Chapter III.

What to see at Rollright.

The King-Stone. The Circle. The Whispering Knights.

'They stand, but stand in silent majesty.'

HAVING arrived there and interviewed the good lady who keeps the key, at the cottage to the west of the Stones, the first object to visit should be the King-Stone, standing just beyond the Circle, over the stile on the other side of the road. While you are getting over the stile, notice the long mound on which the stone stands, running parallel to the road, and the depression between yourself and it, the latter was probably caused by the making of the mound, which may have been the commencement of a fosse or rampart, or a barrow, and it is possible that the Stones may also have been quarried from here. The king-stone is a huge Menhir, or single stone, standing upright within railings at the end of this long mound, in shape resembling somewhat, an Eagle about to soar, but weather-beaten and honeycombed in every conceivable direction. It is 8 feet 6 inches in height, and 5 feet 3 inches in girth, but probably the corrosion of time and weather has somewhat worn it away; some

say it is only a memorial, but it is more than that. It may have been used as a throne at the election and coronation of Kings in early days, who when seated aloft on the Menhir, would be in full view of the tribes gathered on the road and on the side of the hollow, and the ceremonies of the occasion could be seen and acknowledged by all. The very name of King-stone seems to point to this, for if the stone is only the grave or the memorial of a slain King, there is a strange and extraordinary coincidence in its being in the same position to the circle, as the 'Friar's Heel', at Stonehenge; and it is also curious that the position is such that the Sun rises directly over it at the summer solstice. The folklore and traditions we shall deal with in another chapter but may here introduce one story which belongs to these stones. The Stones are generally called by the country folks round, the King-stones and the idea seems to have arisen that they were once living men, a king and his army, who having been promised by an oracle

"When Long Compton you may see
King of England you shall be."

were marching for that purpose over the hill. The King has hurried on in advance of his troops and has arrived within a few yards of the realization of the prophecy when he is met by a Witch, who with an incantation immediately turns them all into stone. It is a fact that only a few yards from the spot, further over the hill, the pretty village of Long Compton lies full in view in the vale below, and the very short distance required to see it is well repaid by the peep over this lovely bit of Warwickshire scenery.

Take the few steps; below, down the steep incline is the little village with its cottages half hidden in the many trees, the square tower of its church stands more clearly out above them; behind is another steep hill, and farther still, another can be seen, grey and half hidden in the misty distance. The scene from this point is a typical bit of Old England in all its loveliness.

Now make your way back a few yards, and cross the road to the little gate in the hedge outside the circle, and enter; you then reach the gate in the iron railing which is locked. Pause here a moment and look round the circle, to the left is the highest stone; (7 ft. 4 in.) and to the right perhaps one of the largest, but on its side. The tall one is said to have a mortice on the top as if a capstone was intended to be fitted upon it, but this is very questionable. All round the circle are rough uncut stones, of every conceivable size and shape, some standing, some leaning, others flat on the ground, all honeycombed with age, channeled, gnarled, seamed, stained, and weather-worn beyond description, the lichen upon them has had centuries to eat into the less durable portions,



Rollright. Entrance to the Circle.

and penetrate every cranny. Most of the Stones are about 16 inches thick but a few of the largest exceed this. In 1882 the owner replaced all the stones possible in their original positions, for before that they seem to have been neglected in every way, and were gradually growing less; as every visitor considered it his special privilege to chip off a bit, either from the King-stone or one of the others. It was time this was put a stop to, and now the following appears on a prominent notice board.



Notice is hereby given that under the provisions of the 'Ancient Monuments Protection Act, 1882,' the commissioners of His Majesty's Woods and Public Buildings have been constituted by the owner the guardians of this Monument, and that any person wilfully injuring or defacing the same will be prosecuted according to law,

Schomberg K. McDonnell,

H. M. Office of Works, &c.,

Secretary.

Westminster, S.W.

It is a great pity that the weeds and grass are often too long to see the stones at their best, but we presume there is no fund to pay for the cost of keeping it cut close: were this done the Circle would appear very much more important than it does when nearly hidden in grass, and the four small mounds in the centre would show. The trees too, help to take away the idea of its size; these are gradually becoming less, and if more are planted this should be done outside the railings, so as to leave the Circle clear; generally all round it corn is growing luxuriantly, increasing the embedded effect, and when this is ripening into gold, the gray stones half covered with lichen and stained with many a tint, stand out of the greener grass against this back-ground with effective boldness and breadth, helped at eventide with the rich colours thrown on them by the setting sun.

Pass into the Circle, from its centre the Sun, on June 21st, is seen to rise directly over the King-stone and the circle stone marked on plan 3.9h. direct to the North East. But for the shortest day you must go to the one marked *Oblique*, four stones to the south east of this, and near the top of this stone is a hole through which the sun shines at its rising on December 21st. It must be remembered that years ago the country was all open, in fact a barren heath; and all the stones could be seen from the circle as then the hedges had no existence.

The Circle is as nearly as possible the same size as Stonehenge *i.e.* 100 feet in diameter ; but the trees planted within dwarf it to the eye, and make it appear smaller than it really is.

One of the folk-lore stories is that no one can count the stones correctly, and the task is worth trying. Begin at the gate and count to the right until you reach the gate again ; then, turn round and count to the left, and see if you agree in both countings. You will rarely do so, and two persons one going one way and one the other, will nearly always differ. There is the story of the baker who put a small loaf on each stone to make sure, but even he failed, as one was missing every time he went round ; and the custodian will point out the bush which hid the stone every time, from the man who swore he would get them correct. Our friend Mr. Hurst in his carefully worked out plan gives 64 stones with their heights marked, 1 marked 'Modern,' 2 'Oblique,' 1 'Flat,' and 4 plotted in, but not marked in any way, making 72. Personally at the stones without the plan, we counted 72, 71, and 73, the smaller number being the reverse way. There are 8 trees ; a few years ago there were 14 or 15 but some have been blown down.

A friend of ours writes 'he rubbed a lot of lichens off the flat stone on the opposite side of the Circle from the gate, and found a group of large marks, which seemed too regular for water drip marks or lichen ; can it be a Druidical symbol partly worn away.?



This is an idea of it, but the marks are so indefinite that we are afraid to venture an opinion upon them ; perhaps some of our readers will hunt them out and send us their ideas on the matter. They certainly appear as though they had some reference to the sun and moon, the crescent being very plain and unmistakable, Could this have been a prayer stone of the early worshippers ? It is nearly close to the original entrance of the circle, by the stone marked 'Oblique' in the plan ; and, is the only stone lying flat.

Taking the circle as a whole, what a quaint assemblage of stones it is ; in the dead of night it is very weird indeed, when the grey stones can only just be made out in the dimness, and the trees are black against the twinkling stars, a fairy-light here and there glinting now and then, like a glow-worm amid the long grass, and the twitter of some small bird whose rest is disturbed yet is too sleepy to seek refuge in flight ; then imagination goes back to the olden times when the place was thronged with worshippers, who perhaps like ourselves watched through the waning night

for the glorious sun to rise again in the east, and shed his beneficent rays upon the open temple and those gathered within. Were the interior kept as it should be, and as Stonehenge is; the awe of the past would be felt in a greater degree than it is at present, in these overgrown ruins of a long distant age.

The Circle was dug into many years ago with the idea of finding something that would throw light upon its history, but nothing seems to have been found in any way. So many centuries have passed since it was raised that it is very probable it is not quite what it was originally. We have it recorded that the stones were replaced as far as possible about 1882, by the then owners, before which date they had not been protected as they are at the present time. Although there is no altar-stone now in the circle, in olden days there was one no doubt, and possibly larger than any of the present stones round it. This is the case at Stonehenge where the altar-stone lies inside the south east of the circle, an immense boulder of stone differing in its composition from all the others, and is said to be the only one that would stand fire. The circle would not be complete as a temple without an altar, and we must certainly conclude that it once existed but has been at some time removed.

Next pay a visit to "The Whispering Knights" the group of stones standing 390 yards east of the Circle. In the autumn when the corn is cut no harm will be done by traversing the field; but earlier, it will be necessary to make a detour along the road, and down by the hedge. These "Whispering Knights" consist of five large stones, three standing up against each other on one side on the other and one leaning, and one immense flat stone fallen. They have been in this position for many years, but probably in early times they were all upright, or the large one now prone may have capped the others; forming a platform or altar on which sacrifices may have been offered.

They are called the 'Whispering Knights' from the legend which tells us about the King, also makes these his Knights, and adds the idea that they were away from their men in the Circle, laying their heads together in a plot; when they were, with the rest, turned into stone.

Stukeley speaks of this Dolmen 'Tis what the old Britons call'd a *kist vaen* or stone chest,' which would imply it was a Sepulchral monument, but we can find no trace of any one of note being buried at Rollright, if there is, the record of the Warrior or King has long since passed into oblivion, like the builders of the stones themselves. The idea of some is, this was the altar of Sacrifice, that the large stone at the east was elevated on the others, this is scarcely borne out by Camden's or Stukeley's pictures and we are practically left to form any idea that fits the particular

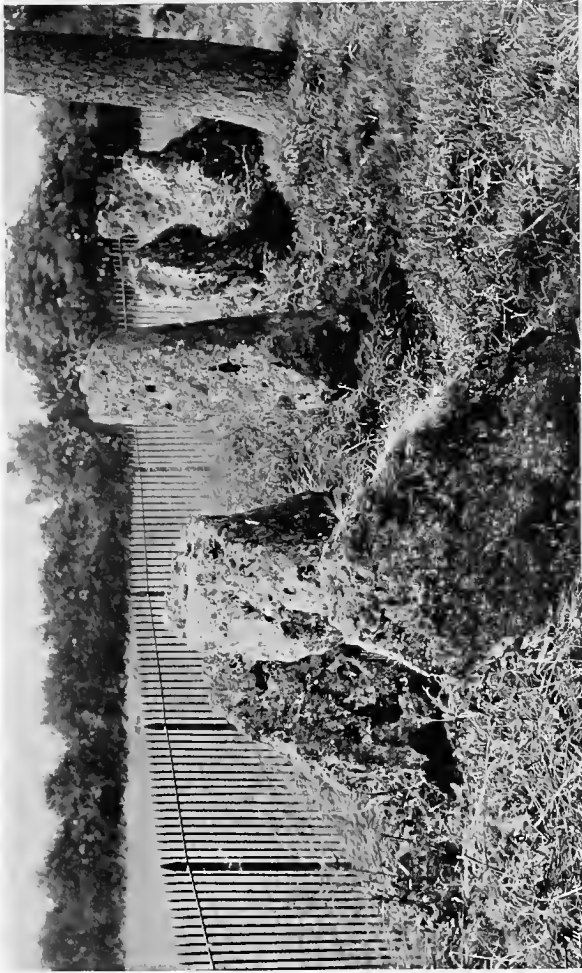
theory which may be preferred. It may even have formed a shelter or dwelling for those in charge of the temple and been covered with earth like Wayland Smith's Cave was, and as many of the Picts dwellings which in Scotland have been, and are still being found and explored.

There are no marks that we can find upon the 'Whispering Knights', the only curiosity is the hole at the top of the high stone, this may have been the outlet for smoke if the place was used as a dwelling. These stones are very weird in the moonlight, when they can fairly be imagined to be alive and moving, and when an old screech owl flies by and sends up his shrill note of 'To whit,' 'To whoo-o-o' amid the dense silence, the effect is startling in the extreme, particularly if one is alone at the time.

The sizes of these stones are as follows. The South one, the largest upright, about 4 ft. by 2 ft. 6 in. and 8 ft. 3 in. high; the next 3 ft. 6 in. by 1 ft. 10 in. and 7 ft. 3 in. high; and the third 3 ft. 8 in. by 1 ft. 4 in. and 6 ft. 7 in. high; the stone on the North 4 ft. 9 in. by 2 ft. and about 5 ft. 4 in. high while the prostrate one measures 8 ft. 4 in. by 5 ft. 9 in. and about 2 ft. 4 in. thick.



ROLLRIGHT! THE WHISPERING KNIGHTS



Kolligbt. Part of the Circle.



THE ROLLRIGHT STONES, C 1607. FROM CAMDEN'S BRITANNIA

Chapter IV.

Historical reminiscences of Rollright.

'A tale of the days of old.'

IN Early British times, before the Roman invasion, the northern parts of Oxfordshire with a great part of Glo'stershire were inhabited by the Dobuni (of Ptolemy) or Boduni (of Dion Cassius.) Their territory seems to have terminated on the hills, along which still runs the boundary between the counties of Oxford and Warwick, beyond them being the great vale of Warwickshire the home of the Cornavii, another great British tribe.

At this time vast portions of Britain were covered with dense forest. These gave shelter to the native inhabitants of the island and within their protecting enclosure, the villages were situated.

But many of the early roads or rather tracks, had to be carried along the hills, partly because of their being easier to traverse in wet seasons, which possibly when forests covered the country were more frequent than now, and because the forest there was less dense than in the valleys. The British track at Rollright seems to have formed a boundary, as it does now, and although the Circle of Stones and the five Knights were on one side of the road, the great King-Stone stands on the other; as though the place was common to the tribes on either side, as no doubt it was. It may have been raised by a gathering of all the tribes, and the Stones were in all probability dug in the immediate neighbourhood as they are distinctly stone of the district.

The earliest mention of the Rollright Stones seems to be in a MS. in the library of Benet College Cambridge, where it is mentioned as 'the second marvel of the realm,' and by some is attributed to the Venerable Bede, but although this is in all probability a mistake, it bears every indication of being early work. Rollright is thus described by Camden, c 1634:—

"Below Einsham, Evenlode a little river arising likewise out of Cotteswold speedeth him into Isis; which riveret on the very border of the shire passeth by an ancient Monument standing not farre from his bank, to wit, certaine large stones placed in a circle called by the vulgar Rolle-rich Stones, and fancied to have once been men changed by a strange metamorphosis into stones. The draught of them such as it is, long since portrayed, heere I represent unto your view. For, without all form and shape they bee, unequal, and by long continuance of time much eaten and impaired. The highest of them all, which without the circle looketh into the earth, they use to call the King, because they fancy he should have been King of England if hee had once seene Long Compton; a little towne so called lying beneath, and which a man if he goe some few paces forward may see. Five others standing on the other side, touching as it were one another, they imagine to have been Knights mounted on horse-backe, and the rest the Army. But loe the aforesaid portraiture—These would I verily thinke to have bene the Memorial of some Victory and haply erected by Rollo the Dane, who afterwards conquered Normandy. For at the time he ravaged England with his Danes and Normans we find the Danes engaged the Saxons hard bye at Hokenorton, and afterwards againe at Scierstone in Huiccia, which I shoulde suppose to be the adjoining boundary stone of the four counties, which is plainly implied in the Saxon word Scierstane. Hokenorton, before mentioned for the rusticity of the inhabitants, became in the last age a proverb, that a boorish or hoggish person was born there. It is remarkable for nothing so much as the horrid slaughter of the English in the battle with the Danes under Edward the Elder."



Rollright. In the Circle.

In the Additions to Camden, we find:—

Rowldrich, which gives name to two villages adjoining, is called in records Rollendrich, and in Domesday, Rollendri; one of which a record in the Exchequer says was held by Turstin Le Dispenser, by serjeantry of being the king's steward; stands on the summit of the high hill on an open down, having but few enclosures about it.

The stones that compose this circle seem to have been taken from the spot. It signifies according to Dr. Stukeley, Rholdrwyg, the wheel or circle of the Druids, or, in the old Irish, Roilig, the church of the Druids. The diameter is 35 yards, exactly equal to the one at Stonehenge. The stones seem to have been originally 60 in number; at present there are 22 standing, few exceeding four feet in height, and 16 inches thick, but one in the very North point is seven feet high, and five and a half broad. The entrance, as at Stonehenge, is from the North East; the middle was dug into by Ralph Sheldon, Esq., in the last century, but nothing found. To the North East is a large long barrow, 60 feet long by 20 broad, flattish at top, much dug down, belonging to an archdruid, between which and the temple is a huge stone called the King-Stone eight feet high and seven broad. Near it is a square plat of turf, where the young people met annually with cakes and ale to celebrate some ancient festival. Another barrow, but circular, below the road to the East on the side of the Hill, had stone-work at the East end.

Many different ones on this heath East, towards Banbury, particularly near Chapel House on the Heath, a large flat circular one, ditcht about with a small tump in the centre; of the sort which Dr. Stukeley calls a Druid's barrow, and many circular dish like caverns as at Stonehenge. Not far from the Druid's barrow is a square work of 100 cubits, double ditcht, the earth thrown inwards, and within are seemingly remains of stone walls; these the Doctor calls 'Druids courts or houses,' and a little farther is a little round barrow with stone-work at the East end; 300 paces East from the temple is a Kist Vaen of six stones; one broaer for the back, two narrow on each side, and a larger on the top, opening West, on a round tumulus. This description, as well as the etymology and use assigned by Dr. Stukeley, carries much more probability with it than the crude conjectures of our earlier writers about Rollo, or about its being a place of coronation as Wormius, which is assented to by Mr. Carte. Bede,* in a MS. "*de-situ-et-mirabili-bus Britanniae*, in Benet College Library, reckons it the second wonder of this kingdom."

Dr. Stukeley visited Rollright in Sep. 1724 and leaves a long account with several drawings of the scene, one of which we

* The MS. is not by Bede, but is undoubtedly early.



ROLLRIGHT STONES IN 1724 REDUCED FROM DR STUKELEY.

reproduce. It fairly tallies with its present form and arrangement.

In his 'Abury' the Doctor thus describes Rollright :—

"Rowldrich is a temple of the Druids, a circular work lying in the north west part of Oxfordshire upon high ground. Two rivers rise here which run in quite opposite directions, the Evenlode which joins the Isis below Woodstock ; visits Oxford and meets the Thames at Dorchester. The other river, Stour, runs from Rowldrich directly north to meet the Avon at Stratford, thence to the Severn Sea. So Rowldrich must needs stand on very high ground and the place itself appears to be a large cop'd hill, on the summit of an open down, and the Temple, with the Arch-druid's barrow hard by, stands on the very tip of it, having a descent every way thence, and an extensive prospect especially into Gloucestershire and Warwickshire. The country here was originally an open barren heath : and underneath, a kind of ragstone. At present there are some enclosures which have been ploughed up. The major part of our antiquity remains, though some of the stones have been carried away within memory to make bridges, houses &c."

"It is an open temple of a circular form, made of stones set upright in the ground. The stones are rough and unhewn and I saw stones near Norton not far off, of good-bulk and the same kind as here ; they are corroded like worm-eaten wood by the harsh jaws of time, and that much more than Stonehenge."

"We are led to this conclusion from the name, Mr. Camden calls them Rolle-rich stones, Dr. Holland in his notes says, in a book in the Exchequer (perhaps he means Doomesday book,) the town adjacent is Rollendrich if written exactly I suppose it would be Rholdrwyg which means Druid's wheel or circle. Further the word Roilig in the old Irish language signifies a Church, then it imports a Druids' Church or Temple. We may call this place the Gilgal of Britain, a word equal to the Celtic Rhol, a wheel or circle which gave name to the famous camp or fortices where the host of Israel first pitched their tents in Canaan."

"We may infer that this is a Druids' temple from its measure, the diameter of the circle is 35 yards. The diameter of Stonehenge is 35 yards. The diameter of the outer circle at Stonehenge and this circle are exactly equal. The circle is composed of stones of various shapes and dimensions set near together as will be seen by the drawing. They are flattish, about 16 inches thick. Originally there seem to have been 60 in number, at present there are 22 standing, few exceeding 4 feet in height, but one in the very north much higher than the rest, 7 feet high, 5½ broad. There is an entrance at the north east as at Stonehenge. Ralph Sheldon, Esq., dug in the circle at Rowldrich but found nothing."

"Another argument of its being a Druids' Temple is taken from the barrows all round it, according to the constant practice in these places. To the north east is a great tumulus or barrow of a long form which I suppose to have been of an Arch - Druid. Between it and the temple is a huge stone standing upright called the King-stone but the barrow has been dug away from it. It is now about 60 feet in length, 20 in breadth, flattish at top."

"In the same place may be seen another barrow, but circular, below the road to the left hand on the side of the hill. Under it is a spring head running eastward to Long Compton. This barrow has had stonework at the east end of it. Upon the same heath eastward in the way to Banbury, are many barrows of different shapes within sight of Rowldrich, on the heath is a large flat and circular tumulus, ditched about with a small stump in the centre. This I call a Druids' barrow, many such, near Stonehenge. There are on this heath, too, many circular dish-like cavities as near Stonehenge, we may call them barrows inverted."

"Not far from the Druids' barrow I saw a square work, such as I call Druids' courts or houses. Such near Stonehenge and Abury. It is a place of 100 cubits square double ditched. The earth of these is thrown inward between the ditches so as to raise a terrace going quite round. The ditches are too inconsiderable for defence. Within, are seemingly remains of stone walls. A little further is a small round barrow with stone work at the east end, a dry stone wall running quite over it across the heath."

"Return we nearer to the Temple and 200 paces directly east from it in the same field, a remarkable monument taken much notice of; it is what the old Britons called a *Kist-vaen* or stone chest, I mean the Welsh, the descendants of those invaders, Belgæ, Gauls, and Cumbrians, who drove away the aboriginal inhabitants, that made these works. The *Kist-vaen* is composed of six stones, one broader for the back part, two and two narrower for the sides set square to the former; and above all, as a cover, a still larger. The opening is full west to the temple. It stands on a round tumulus and has a fine prospect westward down the valley where

the head of Evenlode runs. I persuade myself this was merely monumental erected over the grave of some great person there buried, most probably the King of the Country when the temple was built. And if there was any use of this building it might possibly be some anniversary commemoration of the deceased by feasts, games &c."

"Near the Arch-druids barrow, by that called the King-stone is a square plat oblong, formed on the plat. Hither on a certain day of the year the young men and maidens customarily meet and make merry with cakes and ale. And this seems to be the remains of the very ancient festival here, celebrated in memory of him for whom the long barrow and temple were made."

"Mr. Camden writes that the country people have a fond tradition they were once men turned into stones. The highest of all they call the King. Five larger stones at some distance from the Circle they pretended some Knights, the ring were common soldiers. This story the country people for some miles round are very fond of, and take it ill if anyone doubts of it; nay he is in danger of being stoned for his unbelief."

"We may reasonably affirm that this temple was built here on account of this long barrow, and very often in ancient times temples owed their foundations to sepulchres as well as now. It is a common thing among these works of our Druids and an argument that it is their work."

"Thus we pronounce Rowldrich a Druid temple, from a concurrence of all the appearances to be expected, from its round form, situation on high ground, near springs, on an extended heath; from the stones taken from the surface of the ground, from the name, from the measure it is built on, from the wear of the weather, from the barrows of various kinds about it, from ancient reports, from its apparent conformity to those patriarchal temples mentioned in Scripture. This is to be expected in such antiquities, nor shall I spend time in examining the notion of it belonging to Rollo the Dane and the like. Mr. Camden had too much judgment to mention it. It is confuted, in the annotations to *Britannia* and in Sheldon's notes on Drayton's *Poly Albion*. And let this suffice for this curious and ancient monument, the first kind and most common of the Druid temples; a plain circle of which there are many all over the British Isles, being the original form of all temples till the Mosaic Tabernacle."

Dr. Plot says:—"Besides the circles of Earth cast up by the Danes, there are others of Stone, and particularly one here in the very Bounds of Oxfordshire, near Chipping Norton in the parish of Little Rollwright, the Stones being placed in manner and form and now remain as exactly graven in the illustration* in a Round of

* We have reproduced Dr. Plot's picture at the head of our first chapter. (Ed.)



Rollright. The Whispering Knights.

'twixt 30 and 40 paces over, the tallest of them all which may be a scale for the rest being about Seven Foot high. North of these, about a bolts-shoot off on the other side of the hedge, in the county of Warwick stands one singly alone, upwards of Nine Foot high, in form as described, and Eastwards five others, about two Furlongs off, the highest of them all about Nine Foot also; meeting formerly at the Top as drawn by Mr. Campden, with their tapering Ends almost in Shape of a Wedge since whose time there are two of them fallen down from the rest."

"We read that the Danes joined Battle with the English at Hochnorton, a place for no one thing more famous in old time than for the woeful Slaughter of the English in that foughten field, under the reign of King Edward the Elder."

"That this Monument might be erected by Rollo the Dane, or rather Norwegian, perhaps may be true, but by no means about the time of Edward the Elder, for though it be true enough that he troubled England with Depredations, yet that he made them in the days of King Alfred. Therefore much rather than so, should I think he erected them upon a second Expedition he made into England, when he was called in by King Athelstan to assist him against some potent rebels that had taken up arms, whom having been vanquished and reduced into Obedience to their Prince and perhaps too slain the designed King, (who possibly might be persuaded by this Rebellion upon a conditional prophesy of coming to that Honour when he should see Long Compton) might erect this monument in memory of the fact, the great single stone for the intended King, the five stones by themselves for his principal Captains, and the round for the mixt multitude slain in the battle, which is somewhat agreeable to the Tradition concerning them. But if I may give my opinion what I really think of them, (though I do not doubt much, but they must be a Danish or Norwegian monument) I can by no means allow the round or other stones to be Sepulchral monuments. For had the Cirque of Stones have been any such memorial, it would have had either a tumulus in the middle, or a stone altar like other monuments; that where they might yearly offer Sacrifices in memory of the defunct at the place of his Inhumation. But neither of these are within Rollright Cirque, nor could that curious and learned antiquary, the Worshipful Ralph Sheldon, of Beoly, Esq., who industriously dug in the Middle of it, to see whether he could meet with any symbols or marks (either who might erect it, or for what end or purpose,) find any such matter."

"For the very same reason it is also as certain that it cannot have been any place of Judicature, such as was used in olden time in the Northern nations, but it had no Stone erected in the middle for the Judge to sit on as those always had. Besides these Fora

or places of Judicature (by the Danes called Things) seem always to have had their Muniments of Stone, either of a Quadrangular or Oval Figure and not to be entered but at two sides, as that at Drething mention'd by Wormius ; whereas ours is circular, and shews no signs of such gates."

"Which perhaps might occasion the Learned Dr. Charleton, to judge it rather a Trophy or Triumphal Pile set up as a Monument of some great Victory ; to whom though I cannot but somewhat incline, yet am verily persuaded, that at the same time it might serve also for the Election and Inauguration of a King, and much rather than the great and famous Monument of Stone-henge on Salisbury Plain. For beside that it is placed 1. Upon a rising ground, for the Advantage of Prospect, (that the common people assembled to confirm the Suffrages or Votes of the Electors by their universal applause and congratulatory acclamations ; might see and witness the solem manner of Election.) 2. Made of huge stones of no regular Figure ; and thirdly, having no Epigraph or Inscription cut or trenched in the stones ; as carrying a sufficient Evidence of its Designment and use in the Figure of its Platform."

"It is but a single Cirque of Stones without Epistyles or Architraves ; few of them very high on which the Electors might easily get up to give their Suffrages, as was usually done in the Northern nations ; whereas Stonehenge is made up of three circles at least, (some say four,) and the Stones of each Circle joined with Architraves ; whereof there is no example to be found in those Countries. That the Northern nations usually erected such cirque of rude stones for the Election of their Kings, is fully testified by Olaus Wormius as follows :—"In this country are beheld certain Courts of Parliament in which Kings here-to-fore were solemnly elected, which are surrounded with great stones, for the most part twelve in number, and one other stone exceeding the rest in eminency set in the middle ; upon which as upon a regal throne they seated the newly elected King by the general suffrage of the assembly, and inaugurated him with great applause and loud acclamations. Here they held their great councils and consulted about allairs of the kingdom ; but when they met together to nominate their Kings the electors stood upright on the stones environing the court, and giving their voices thereby confirmed their choice."

"This same practice of the Northern nations with the ceremonies of it, are also briefly set down by Saxo Grammaticus, *i. e.* that the ancients being about to choose their King, used to stand upon stones fixed in the ground, and thence give their votes ; by the firmness of the stones on which they stood, tacitly declaring the firmness of their act, which places of election it seems were held so sacred, that in times of peace the candidate King was obliged

there to receive his inauguration; the place and ceremonies being accounted essential parts of his right to sovereignty, and the votes of his electors much more valid and authentic, for being pronounced in the usual forum."

"But if it happened the King fell in a foreign expedition by the hand of the enemy, the army got together a parcel of great stones and set them in such a round, as well sometimes perhaps for the interment of the deceased King as election of his successor; and this 'tis like they did 1. because they esteemed an election in such a forum a good edition of title; and secondly with all expedition, because by the delay of such election too long, irreparable damages many times accrued to the republic there-upon, which practice of the Danes is confirmed by various authorities."

"Beside the Erection of Stones in Foreign nations upon the loss of one King, and election of another; what if I should add that it's also very likely that the same might be done at the investiture of a Conqueror into a new acquired Principality. Thus why might not Rollo, either being compelled as a younger brother to leave Denmark or Norway, as was appointed by the Law of the former Kingdom, and to seek him a new seat; or forced from the latter for Piracy by King Harold Harfager, as in the Chronicle of Norway; I say why might not Rollo after good success against those he invaded, be elected King by his followers, and be inaugurated here as well as there, within such a Circle of Stones, which bearing his name to this very day, and he being acknowledged by Brompton to have beaten the Saxons, and to have tarried in this nation a whole Winter; it is highly probable he might be."

"For if we enquire into the origin of this Cirque of Stones, we shall find that Reich or Riic, signifies a Kingdom and sometimes a King; whence 'tis plain that these Stones seem still to be called the Stones of King Rollo, or perhaps rather of Rollo's Kingdom; for it was customary for them to have so many Cirques of Stones as Kingdoms, though in the same country. Thus as Wormius testifies there are three at this day in the Kingdom of Denmark; one in Sealand, another in Schoneland, and a third in the Cimbrick Territory; because these were anciently three distinct Principalities, and under the Dominion of as many Kings as 'tis certain England was also about this time, and if this conjecture may be allowed to take place, we are supplied also with a reason why we have no Tumulus in or near this Monument; there being no King or eminent commander slain, but only a conquest of the enemy in or near this place, intimated by the five Stones meeting in a point at the top; which perhaps may be the disposition intended by Saxo Grammaticus, which he says expressly signifies that Knights or Horseman there or near the place, obtained a glorious Victory. Yet against this conjecture there lie two objections, 1. that in these

Cirques of Stones designed for the election of Kings, there was always a Kongstolen, most times bigger than the rest placed in the middle of it ; and secondly, that had this place been as first designed for the inauguration of a Danish or Norwegian King, and such places being so essential to a good title, certainly all the Kings of the Danish race that reigned after here in England would have either been crowned here, or at some other such Forum ; whereas we have no such Kongstolen in the middle of the Cirque, and beside, find Canutus with great solemnity crowned at London, Harold Harefoot here at Oxford, not far from this Cirque ; and Hardi-Canute likewise at London ; to which it may be replied that although not placed in the Cirque yet there is a Kongstolen not far off, which 'tis like was not necessary should be set within it ; for I find the place where the new elected King stood and shewed himself to the people at Leire in Sealand, to have been without the area as our Kongstolen is."

"And to the second objection it may be reasonably answered that the Danes having gotten the whole kingdom, and such capital cities as London and Oxford were, might well change the places of their Coronations. Besides, Canutus and the rest were much greater persons and more civilised than Rollo and his crew can be presumed to have been ; for he lived above a hundred years before them, and we find him (though the son of a Norwegian Earle,) a great Pyrate at sea, and little better than a robber by land ; well might he therefore be contented with this inauguration after the old barborious fashion, having gained no city wherein it might be done with greater solemnity."

Thus, our old historians, by their contradictions, throw but little real light upon the matter.



Chapter V.

Folk Lore of Rollright. &c.

‘In Tradition’s oft told tale there’s many a worthy truth enshrined.’

THE Folk Lore of the Rollright Stones is most interesting, and possibly to it, is owing the majority of the visits paid by tourists and those in the neighbourhood. We have drawn on the writings of Dr. A. J. Evans,* who collected everything he could bearing on this; and he has done it so thoroughly, that although we ourselves have gathered also from every possible source, including a number of visits to the Stones and their neighbourhood, there is very little but variations of the same stories to be obtained. These little touches of the country side, all help to give colour and interest to a monument like Rollright, as they are the quaint ideas which have grown up around it in many, many years.

We must first tell the story as it is most generally told, and which gives as it were the key to many of the others, and to the monument as a whole. “A certain King, whether Danish or otherwise is not quite sure, landed at Dover, with his army, to invade the country and conquer all England. He there consulted an Oracle or Witch, or Wise woman, all three are mentioned; who informed him,

“When Long Compton you shall see
King of England you shall be.”

Enquiring, he made his way up Rollright hill, marching with his forces until he had nearly reached the top, and at last eager to win the promised crown, hastens in advance of his men and arrives at a spot within a few steps of the crest from which the village of Long Compton would be seen lying in the valley below, when he is met by the Witch of evil eye and horrid shape, to whom the hill belongs, who stops him with the words,

“Seven long strides if thou can’st take,
Take them boldly and win free,
If Long Compton thou can’st make,
King of England thou shalt be.”

*The Rollright Stones and their Folk Lore. Folk Lore Journal March 1895.

The King who now judged his success assured, cried out exultingly,

“Stand aside; by stick, stock, stone,
As King of England I shall be known!”

He took a stride or two forward, but instead of rising the brow of the hill as he expected, the long mound of earth rose up before him; and before the seven strides were completed, the Witch said,

“Long Compton thou wilt never see,
King of England thou shalt not be,
Rise up stick and stand still stone,
For King of England thou shalt be none;
Thou and thy men hoar-stones shalt be,
And I myself an eldern-tree.

Whereupon the King, his Army, and the Knights who had lingered behind plotting against him, were all turned into stones as they stood, the King on the side of the mound, his army in a circle behind him, while the Witch herself became an elder tree. But they do say, some day the spell will be broken. The stones will turn again into flesh and blood, and the King will start as an armed warrior at the head of his army to overcome his enemies and rule over the land; while the Witch in vain will try to stop their progress and at last will vanish, to reappear as a spring from out the hill-side. That's how it is that no one dares take away any of the stones; and if they do so, they are bothered out of their lives until they bring them back again.

Here is another version of the legend:—A certain ambitious warrior, being minded to reduce all England beneath his sway, set out one day with a train of five Knights and a well appointed band of sixty soldiers to effect his mediated conquest. Advancing from the south towards the border of Warwickshire, where his fate as he had been darkly foretold was to be decided; he halted his little army for the night on the edge of Wychwood Forest, not far from the spot where now stands the little village of Shipton-under-Wychwood. His reason was, to confer with the wise woman who dwelt at Shipton, who afterwards gave her name to the place. His council consisted of the Knights with him, but leaving them, he secretly left the camp and proceeded to the hut of Mother Shipton. The Knights followed and saw their leader enter the hut; but none of them had courage to venture further, and what took place can only be imperfectly guessed at. It is believed however that in order to obtain her assistance, the warrior offered all he could, but Mother Shipton imposed terms so hard, that no compact was made, and high words arose; for the harsh voice of the Witch was heard to threaten the warrior, who came forth in great wrath and strode back to his camp.

At break of day he was in the saddle marshalling his men and long before the sun had gilded the tops of the forest trees, he led them across Lynelham Heath; and skirting Knolberry Banks left the old Saxon Mart of Ceapen-Nortone behind, and plunged into the woody glades which lay between him and his desires. After a toilsome march he came to a steep ascent, laboriously his followers climbed the hill, nor rested until the crest of the ridge was nearly reached. Here they paused, the five Knights remaining some little distance apart, while their eager leader spurred towards the slight eminence, which was all that impeded the view of the broad valley beyond; where lay Long Compton, the object of his expectations. Suddenly, a weird female figure appeared on the rising summit of the Knoll, and in the clear morning light, the Knights recognized the unearthly lineaments of the Witch. They heard their leaders voice as he breasted the last ascent,

"Out of my way you Hag! he cried,
Your words are nought, you lie, you lied,
Long Compton I shall surely see
Then King of England I shall be."

But a shrill voice exclaimed.

"Rise up mound and stand fast stone,
King of England thou shalt be none,
And this thy punishment shall be
For threat'ning death and flouting me,
Thou and all thy men shall stand
Fixed for ever to the land."

She waved her arm above her head. As she spoke the earth welled up, and the warrior with his Knights and the whole of his army were at once turned to stone, and there they are fixed until the sound of the trump at the last day, when they will again turn into their proper shape in flesh and blood. Seven paces further if the warrior could have taken them, the village of Long Compton would have been clearly seen, but where the King-stone buries its base in the ground, nothing is visible but the hill side.

Some say there is a great cave beneath the ground, both under the King-stone, as well as the Circle, where the warriors assemble on one night in each year, and drink in Mead, confusion to their enemies and the Witch in particular. But the Witch-Elder still watches over the victims of her magic; although no one is certain which particular elder bush she is. She may be the very one that grows amid the stones of the Whispering Knights, and if so is there listening to their plotting; for that they are plotting still there is little doubt, their heads lean toward each other the same as when they were turned into their present shape. She may be one of those in the hedge by the road, not far from the King-stone, waiting to hear his call, and try and

frustrate his moving when again he comes to life. Some say she was the large one near the Circle, which was blown down one very rough night some years ago; or the one in the field by a stone, which was some years ago pointed out to Dr. Evans as "the Witch." As a matter of fact, the elder grows about here in luxuriant clumps, along every hedgerow, and wherever there is a waste patch; and before the country was enclosed the Stones may have been surrounded by a dense thicket, in which elder trees predominated; although neither Stewkley or Plot notices this.

"The proof (writes Dr. Evans,) that the elder is a witch, is that it bleeds when it is cut, and with regard to this I came upon a remarkable tradition, which an old woman, the wife of a man of eighty, told me she had heard many years ago from her husband's mother. On Midsummer Eve, when the 'Eldern tree' was in blossom, it was a custom for people to come up to the Kingstone and stand in a circle. Then the 'Eldern' was cut, and as it bled, the King moved his head. This breaking of the spell by blood-letting fits on to a very wide spread superstition regarding witches, and in Long Compton, they say that if you only draw her blood 'be it but a pin's prick' the witch for the time loses all power. For the 'Eldern-tree to bleed it must be in blossom.'

Although among older people these beliefs have half died out, they still survive among the younger branches, but even the young have not the leisure their forefathers had to pay the May-day or Midsummer's Eve visits to the stone, as was the old custom when a homely picnic was nearly universal. There are survivals of this in many other places, although few know the origin of the custom. At Chilswell Hill near Oxford, the Happy Valley is the rendezvous on Good Friday; and at Abingdon, a visit is also made to the hills on that day.

Arnold in his poems tells of,

*"Maidens who from distant hamlets come,
To dance around the Fyfield Elm in May."*

In Oxford itself, it is considered the thing by lads and lasses to visit the Magdalen Tower ceremony, and then wend ones way to the Fields, and bring home a big gay bunch of flowers.

Elder flowers, everywhere in the country, are used as a spring lotion for the complexion; the young leaves bruised in lard, are considered a capital reparation for the skin, while the blood-like berries in autumn, when made into a thick wine is unrivalled for relaxed throats; or served hot, forms a splendid pick-me-up, after a long tiring journey on a wet cold winters' night, and is to be found in nearly every country home. Little wonder therefore that legends gather round the Elder-tree, which has so many magical properties. Dr. Evans reminds us of the Anderson fairy tale, in

which those who drink of elder-flower tea, see the Elder-mother (Hyldemoer) herself in their dreams seated amidst her sweet scented flowers and foliage. In Denmark, he says the tree itself has been seen to move about in the twilight. In Nether-Saxony, before under-cutting an Elder, it is usual to go down on bended knees before the tree, with uncovered head and pray as follows: 'Dame Elder, give me some of thy wood, and I will give thee some of mine when it grows in the forest.' Of the earliest association of the tree with witchcraft a record is preserved in the Canons of King Edgar who speaks of the 'vain practices which are carried on with Elders.'

The Rev. J. R. Marston has versed the legend thus:—

"Deep in a glen by Compton
 An Elder green and pale
 By fairies sown, blooms all alone
 And scents the summer gale,
 But if the passing pilgrim,
 Shall pluck one tender spray,
 Red drops of blood, ooze from the wood,
 So folks at Compton say.

Thus year by year in sorrow,
 Of nature's grace renewed,
 The Elder pale, weeps in the vale
 Memorial tears of blood,
 And still Long Compton mothers
 Repeat the story dread,
 How King and valiant men two score,
 The wicked woman slew of yore
 On windy Rollrich head."

"The Fairies dance around the King-stone at night, particularly on Midsummer Eve; and in the fields around, their fairy rings are found; the brighter green grass where their little feet have left the tracks of their last nights revel. You can see them and they will not harm you; but you must be pure in deed and word to do this. Only those who have lived a thoroughly pure life are permitted this privilege, and even then, it is not given to everyone. Fairies are capricious, they take likes and dislikes, and will not always make themselves visible, even to the best of mortals. The fairies are not so intimate with mortals as they were years ago." Dr. Evans says "Will Hughes of Long Compton, now dead, had actually seen them dancing round the King-stone. They were little folk like girls to look at." He often told a friend who related to me about the fairies and the hours they danced. His widow Betsy Hughes, whose mother had been murdered as a witch, and who is now between seventy and eighty, told me when she was a girl and used to work in the hedgerows, she remembered a bank by the King-stone from which the fairies came out to dance at

night. Many a time she and her playmates had placed a flat stone over the hole of an evening to keep the fairies in, but they always found it turned over next morning."

We ourselves spent Midsummer night at Rollright last year. The night was very dark, but now and then stars peeped between the clouds, and in the grass fairy lights sparkled here and there, sometimes singly, sometimes several together. The sighing of the summer wind at times sounded very mournful, but it was mostly still and often no sound was heard for several minutes together. We sat on the stile by the King-stone waiting for the fairies to reveal themselves, but beyond the glinting lights nothing appeared, nor did a visit to the Circle and Whispering Knights bring out any other details. We stayed until after sunrise, but it was a grey morning and the sun hid his face, so we had not the pleasure even of seeing him rise over the King-stone, although a ray of light between the clouds showed often where he was hiding. It was a weird and not unpleasing experience, giving us a revelation of many things not before known, and my companion has often since expressed the wish to repeat the visit another year, should the weather be fine.

Chips were taken from the King-stone by every drover who passed, and by others, for luck; but luck does not always come with them. With some the idea was "the chips would keep the Devil off." Many believe that to injure the stones would bring punishment to the offender. "A ploughman," says Dr. Evans, "informed me that one day, a man who was driving along the road to Banbury, swore to a friend who was with him, that he would carry off a chip of the King-stone, 'though his wheel locked.' He got down from his cart and chipped off a piece, but when he tried to drive on, he found one wheel was locked in such a way, that nothing he could do would make it go round again." It is more unsafe still now; the chipping off a piece from these stones, if known, will be followed by the person themselves being locked up, with an interview afterwards with one of the district magistrates, and a heavy fine and costs, as the monument is under the protection of the Act. In Wales it is said, to injure the stones is to ensure the breakdown of the aggressor's waggon or cart, and this same belief still survives here.

Other legends are attached to the King-stones, says Dr. Evans. They and the Whispering Knights are said to go down the hill at mid-night, to drink of a spring at Little Rollright Spinney. According to some accounts they go down every night when the clock strikes twelve, according to others, only at special seasons. What is more, a gap in the bushes is pointed out as that through which they go to the water. Some stories make them go down Long Compton Hill, to drink of the spring there, some say only

the King goes down, and others make his men go with him, but sceptics hint that it is only when the King *hears* the clock strike, meaning that as he never hears it he stays where he is. This same idea is rife in other places among the country people, and in Berkshire and Gloucestershire, in respect to various landmarks; while the Bretons tell the story of how the stones at Carnac go down to the sea on Christmas Eve; and at Camelot, King Arthur and his knights are also said to come riding down to drink of the waters of a spring by Sutton Monks Church.

In days long gone by, a visit to the stones after dark was often taken by some childless mother in the hope that by bareing her breasts and touching the King-stone with them, the dearest wish of her heart would be gratified, and that in consequences she would become the happy mother of a bright child; loved and cherished by the fairies as a foster child, who would be successful in every way through life, owing to the help it would receive and the way its path would be smoothed, by the little people watching over it. In later years it was thought that in times of illness, a prayer offered up in the midst of the circle for the recovery of the sick was a sure method of securing their recovery. Both these ideas evidently are remnants of the ceremonies of the long ago, when the Priests of this Temple held sway over the country round, and taught their worshippers that an offering in the temple was far more efficacious than anything else; indeed, even now, the same idea is rife among people, and many in trouble rightly turn to their Church for the comfort they seem perhaps to be denied elsewhere.

The Whispering Knights are supposed to have been traitors who were plotting against their King, and the very way their heads were laid together when they were turned into stone is said to prove this. There is a tradition, that the large flat stone of these Knights was taken away to make a bridge at Little Rollright. A score of horses had all their work to do to drag it *down* the hill, for it would not move, and the harness gave way in all directions. At last they got it to the brook and laid it over, but every night the stone turned over again and laid itself out on the grass. After finding it thus three mornings, it was decided that the stone must go back to whence it came. This time they set a single horse to the work, and the one horse took it *up* the hill quite easily, although it had taken twenty to drag it down and even that they could hardly do. This story is also told of Long Compton, where the miller is said to have used the stone to dam the waters of his mill; but he found that all the water collected in the day disappeared at night, and at last came to the conclusion that the stone was bewitched and he had better get it back again. It took three horses to drag it down the hill; one easily took it

up again. The same story is told of the Devil's Coits at Stanton Harcourt, and of other stones in various parts of England and countries abroad. Another version makes a farmer want it for an out-house. In taking it down hill his waggon is broken and the horses killed. Next his crops fail, and his cattle died until he had only one horse left. With this one last animal the stone is easily taken back, and from that time the farmer's luck changed, his crops flourished and everything went well with him.

"Perhaps," says Dr. Evans, "the most interesting feature concerning the Whispering Knights, is that the Dolmen has become to the young girls a kind of primitive oracle. At least it has been so used within the memory of man. Old Betsy Hughes informed me that years ago, at the time of barley harvest, when they were often out 'till dusk in the fields near these 'Whispering Knights,' one of the girls would say to another 'Let's go and hear them whisper.' Then they would go to the stones, and one at a time would put their ear to a crevice. But first one would laugh and then another, and she herself never heard any whispering. Another old crone told me 'the stones were thought to tell of the future.' 'When I was a girl' said she, 'we used at certain times to go up to the 'Knights' and climb up on to one of them to hear them whisper. Time and again I have heard them—but there, perhaps, 'twas only the wind.'"

The wind from S.W. still, when rain is coming, sighs in a curious way through a hole in these stones, and at night time when all is still, this can easily be imagined to be whispers. And who has not heard of the Egyptian Memnon, who at sunrise raises his voice in an ode to the rising luminary, while in many places stones are said at certain times to become vocal.

The name of Rollo or Roland is attached to these Stones, the names of the two villages in Domesday being given as Rollandri, "the original form of which must (says Dr. Evans,) have been Rollandriht, *ie*:- the right or jurisdiction of Roland. The name takes us back to the time when 'Roland the Brave' stood forth as the Legendary Champion of Christendom against the Paynim," but these stones are centuries older than that. How the name got attached to this district we have no record, but it rather leads to the conjecture whether there was not a previous tradition in connection with the leader of the earlier tribe; whose very name is now lost, and who probably erected this monument. In the dim mist of the past, when the legends of Roland were rife and the stories of his prowess repeated through the land, how easy to connect these stones with him, particularly if an earlier Roland was before spoken of, whose name had died out in the memory of the people.

In North Germany, Roland is held up as a symbol of popular


power and right, the statues often bear a dalmatic, royal mantle and crown, while they stand in the place where free imperial justice was dispensed. So at Rollright, the King-stone the chief block there, answers to the Roland columns of Germany, and the Circle hard by to the council of the nation, and thus we see how natural was Dr. Plot's theory that Rollright was a place where councils were held by the Danes for the election of their Kings. And the same legends of the Roland statues coming to life at a certain time, again hangs round these stones, in fact it is easily possible to trace duplicate stories among the folk lore of Germany, which answer to the many tales told of the Rollright Stones.



Chapter VI.

Long Compton.

“Wings have we, and as far as we can go, we may find pleasure.”

 HIS Warwickshire village so often referred to in the folklore of the Rollright Stones, lies at the foot of the long hill below the King-stone, and through it runs the main roads from Oxford and Chipping Norton to Shipton-on-Stour and beyond. It is a picturesque little place with cottages mostly jotted here and there in their own gardens along the side of the road, and a comfortable Inn, and is said to be quite a mile long. At the further end of the village from the Stones is the Church, partly hidden from the road behind a group of picturesque cottages, one of which forms the lich gate entrance to the Church-yard; and this group with the Church behind them and the trees on the other side of the way, forms a picture, charming at every period of the year. A little turn to the right leads to the Vicarage, an old building with some of its walls particularly massive, and these are said to be the only remains of the Monastery or cell which once existed here; some of the old trees of the Monks garden, or burial ground, with their venerable foliage still furnishing welcome shade

Close by is a picturesque thatched cottage with a fine old Mulberry tree near, reputed to be the birthplace of the celebrated Dick Whittington, who at the sound of the Bow Bells, turned again and taking courage, manfully braved the buffets of life which had nearly proved too hard for him, adding to his career as foretold by the bells, the honorable dignity of Lord Mayor of London.

The story of the Manor is interesting from the eminent people who have owned it; Geoffrey de Mandeville was possessed of it when the Domesday Survey was made, and there was then a Church; but no part of the present edifice is as old as this. It afterwards passed by marriage to Humphry de Bohun, Earl of Hereford, sometime after to William Mareshall, Earl of Pembroke, and later to the Earls of Northampton, who still own the greater part of the village.

The Church is well worth a visit. Mostly in the Decorated style, its Chancel has a three light geometrical East window, a double Piscina and Selidia, a plain Chancel arch with modern rood screen. The Nave is spacious and lofty, with Perpendicular clerestory battlemented on the outside, and a beautiful Sancte-bell turret at the eastern end, the entrance is by a South Porch in which is the mutilated effigy of a Priest. The Tower at the western end is lofty, the lower part is of Early work with Lancet windows; while the upper story is later and has corner pinnacles and pierced battlements. It contains seven bells. There is a charming little Perp. Chapel on the South side of the Chancel, with a small two light East window, and two flat headed windows on the South side; while one of the outer windows of the earlier Church looks into it. The North Aisle is connected by four bays to the Nave, the East end forming at one time the Phillips' gallery, while the Font is a charming piece of Dec. work standing on short columns with masks over each. The Church was restored in 1900; at the West end is still the old barrel organ, long since disused, but the sexton can tell some quaint stories about it, when it was the leader of the choir of the Church.

Up to a short time ago a motor 'bus plied to and fro from the neighbouring town of Shipton-on-Stour; but proving unremunerative it has been discontinued, and the village is relegated to the sleepy condition of the good old times.

A curious story in Dugdale about Long Compton, recites that S. Augustine then arrived in England, came hither, whereupon the priest of this parish referred to him and made a complaint that the Lord of the Town not paying his tythes, though admonished; was by him excommunicated and yet stood more obstinate. S. Augustine therefore convening him for that fault, demanded the reason of such refusal. "Knowest not thou" quoth he, "that they are not thine but God's." To whom the Knight answered, "Did not I plow and sow the land? I will therefore have the tenth sheaf as well as the ninth." Whereupon S. Augustine replied "If thou wilt not pay them, I will excommunicate thee," and so hastening to the altar publicly said, "I command that no excommunicate person be present at Masse." Which words were no sooner said, than that a dead man, that lay buried at the entrance into the Church, immediately arose out of his Grave went without the compass of the Church yard and there stood during Masse. Which being finished, S. Augustine went to him and said, I command thee in the name of God to tell me who thou art. To which he made answer. "I was patron of th'es place in the time of the Britons and frequently warned by the Priest, yet never would pay him my Tythes and so dyed excommunicate and was thrust into Hell."

S. Augustine ordered him to show where the priest was buried who excommunicated him and being directed to his grave, called him and told him "we have need of thee." He therefore came out of his grave and in reply to S. Augustine, who asked if he had known the man, said, 'Yes, but I wish I never had, he was always a rebel to the Church, a withholder of Tythes, and to the last very wicked, which occasioned me to excommunicate him.' S. Augustine replied that 'God was merciful, and must have pity on this miserable creature who has so long endured the pains of Hell.' Whereupon giving him a scourge he kneeled down and craving absolution had it granted; and so by S. Augustine's command returned to his grave and was resolved to dust. Then said S. Augustine to the Priest, "How long hast thou been buried." "Above 150 years said he." "How hast thou fared." 'Well!' quoth the priest; "enjoying the delights of Eternal Life." "Art thou content, said S. Augustine," "that I should pray unto God that thou return again to us, and by thy preaching reduce many souls unto him." "Far be it O Father," quoth the Priest "that thou shouldst so disturb my quiet, as to bring me back to this troublesome world." "Go thy way then said S. Augustine and rest in peace." So accordingly he entered his grave and fell to dust.

Then turned S. Augustine to the Knigh and said "Wilt thou now pay thy tythes to God my son." And he trembling and weeping fell at his feet, confessing his offence craved pardon, and shaving himself, became a follower of S. Augustine all the days of his life.





Long Compton, Village and Church.



Long Compton, Edith Whittington's Cottage.



ST. MARY'S, CHIPPING NORTON

Chapter VII.

Ye olde town of Nortone Ceapen.
(Chipping Norton.)

'Old Towns have always a charm, like old Wine.'



CHIPPING NORTON, (the North Market town,) by its prefix "ceapen," evidently was a market in Saxon times although no records seem to exist before we read in Domesday as follows. (Vol I, 158-60.)

"The land of Ernulf of Hesding. Ernulf holds Nortone, there are 15 hides and one virgate. The land is 21 carucates, in demesne 10 ploughs, and 15 serfs, and 22 villeins and 16 bordars, have 11 ploughs. There are 3 mills of 72d and 60 acres of meadows. It was worth £16 now £22. Turgot held it free.

The land of Richard, and other servants of the King. Theoderi the Goldsmith holds one hide of the King in Nortone. The land is one carucate in demesne, it was worth 10s now 20s."

Soon after the Norman Conquest, the manor of Chipping Norton became the property of William Fitzalan, and remained in the possession of that family until Edward III, when Edmund

Earl of Arundel, son of Richard Fitzalan, was beheaded, his estates seized, and given to Roger de Mortimer, Earl of March. This nobleman afterwards lost the King's favour, and with it his life and estates, which then passed through various hands, the manor eventually being granted to the De Veres, Earls of Oxford. On the attainder of John de Vere, after the battle of Barnet Field, the manor was granted by Edward IV to his brother the Duke of Gloucester, afterwards Richard III.

The town sent Burgesses to Parliament in the reigns of King Edwards I to III, but were afterwards exonerated on their own petition from the responsibility.

Later we find the place governed by two Bailiffs, being incorporated by a Charter dated 27th of February 1607, but since 1835, the Bailiffs have given way to the present Mayor and Corporation.

Chipping Norton is built on the side of the hill, and a stiff climb it is from the Station to the Market place. Even there one row of houses on the side of the fine broad street, stands several feet higher than those on the other side. At the south end of this open street is the Town Hall, rather a bold building with a Doric Pediment at its entrance; and in the Market place are more than one good Hotel. On the way from the station also, notice one of the fine old coaching inns on the right side of the hill, now used mostly as cottages. The shops and other establishments in the town are superior to many inland places, and it still has its market on Wednesday; which seems to have existed from time immemorial.

Pay a visit to the Church dedicated to St. Mary, which is among the grandest class of Oxfordshire Churches, passing along the Middle row (the lower part of the Market Place) and taking the turn to the left down Church Street. There are several noticeable bits to be seen on the way down, with the Church tower as a centrepiece, and don't miss the old Almshouses, with their quaint gateway on which is recorded 'Remember the poor'; the houses are eight in number forming a picturesque group, the centre bearing the name of the founder and date, "Henry Cornish, 1640."

The top of Church Street is fairly level with the top of the Tower of the Church, and the ground slopes sharply down until the gates are reached. Here the scene unfolds, the Chancel, the open Clerestory, the South Aisle with its very fine Dec. East window, and the hexagonal Porch with its Parvise above, are all seen. Enter by the Porch, which is very graceful, with corner buttresses and gurgoyles standing out below the parapet; it has a groined stone ceiling, and the south door of the church has deeply cut ornamentation of a ball flower growing on a climbing plant. The interior of the Church as seen from the entrance and



ST. MARY'S, CHIPPING NORTON.

also from the North East corner is majestic, looking across the nave and the aisles beyond, arch beneath arch, and column beyond column in exquisite symmetry ; forming vista upon vista, which reveal themselves as we gaze. Now walk to the west end of the nave and looking eastward, another fine scene opens. The lofty nave and its beautifully light clustered columns towering up to the large open clerestory above, with the timbers of the roof resting upon them ; the chancel arch with its panelling and a very graceful open light with inner tracery above, and the heavier chancel beyond, together forming a charming picture of an exquisite church. On either side, the three North and South Aisles stretch further than the Nave itself, and widen the Church so that it is broader than it is long.

Now walk forward to the Chancel, noting the remains of the Shrine or Chantry Chapel behind the stone pulpit, found and restored so far in one of the restorations ; also the stairway which led to the rood screen which existed there until the church was stripped in 1841. There are two levels in the doorways which lead outwards, and this seems to point to two levels in the screen, but there is no record of this ; at that period great galleries usurped the aisles, but these were also removed. The Chancel is the oldest part of the present Church, and dates back to the 14th, or early 15th, Century ; the Nave being rebuilt at the cost of John Ashfield, c. 1485. Notice in the chancel the beautiful Sedilia, and opposite, the Hagioscope of three lights, to enable the worshippers in the north aisle to watch the elevation of the Host.

Pass back to the inner North Aisle and note the arcade and

columns, which possibly belonged to the older nave ; the fine altar tomb with alabaster figures to Thomas Richards and Elizabeth his wife, 1579. There is another fine tomb at the west end to Richard and Ann Croft, also with recumbent figures. In the outer North Aisle the collected brasses are arranged upon oak slabs against the wall in the order of their dates and by each a printed description is placed. A large monument at the western part to the Dawkins family of Over Norton is not of much beauty. This aisle was possibly built by John Pergett, ironmonger, (c. 1484) but seems to be later than that date ; his merchant's mark is repeated both on the outside and also on the inside of it, and his brass is on a slab standing among the rest.

The South Aisle is Decorated, and its beautiful East window is one of the finest features in the church ; but from the inside the beauty of its tracery is not so apparent as from the outside. The roof of this aisle has evidently been lowered, probably when the nave and its clerestory were rebuilt, and the apex of the window stands above the roof. In the South Aisle is a list of the Rectors before 1391, when the Church passed to St. Peter's, Gloucester ; from which time the Abbey held the rectorial tythes and appointed Vicars, the names of these being also recorded. The Tower built in 1823 replaces a more graceful square Dec. Tower, a picture of which is to be found in Skelton's Oxfordshire.

Under Messrs Putnams shop in the Market Place, is a cellar containing bays of vaulting of 13th century work in good preservation, said to be the only remains of the 'monastery,' but this is doubtful. There was a Guild with a Guild Chapel which was of the value at its dissolution of £7 14s.

There are no remains of the Castle of the Fitzallans, except the green mounds north of the Church known as Castle Banks. It was built in Stephen's reign, but there is no description of it in any way that we can find. Chipping Norton besides its market, has a manufactory of Cloth carried on for many years by the family of Bliss ; a few years ago its productions won a great reputation, which under the present vigorous management bids fairly to rise still higher, and the latest machinery and appliances have been introduced into its improved buildings. The mill with its tall chimney forms a notable object down the railway valley from that side of the town.

Gloves too, are a staple industry at Chipping Norton, introduced into the town sometime between 1820—1830 by Benjamin Bowen of Worcester, the predecessor of one of the present firms. Both Messrs B. Bowen and Sons and Messrs T. & D. Stayte employ a large number of hands besides the sewing done in the villages round, the former firm having also a Tannery and include leather gaiters among the items of their manufacture.

Chapter VIII.

Some account of the Ancient Druids,

with Sagas rendered into English.

“ Brave Patriot souls in righteous battle slain,
Securely now the tuneful task renew
And noblest themes in deathless songs pursue.”



Past Noble Arch of one of the oldest Druids' lodges in our land, the Author with very much pleasure has collected these notes on the subject of the Ancient Druids; who in their day were undoubtedly the leading Caste in Britain, Priests as well as Teachers, Judges, and Law-givers to its people. Unfortunately for ourselves one of their tenets was, that they committed none of their knowledge to writing, their communication to their pupils and followers being entirely oral, so that when the majority of them were massacred by the Roman General Suetonius Paulinus, in their last refuge at Mona (or Anglesea,) the great mass of information they possessed was lost. Yet, not all; even then some Druids fortunately were left; and among other bits of Druidic lore we have gathered a few remnants of the poetical Sagas which will be found in these pages.

The idea of some is, that the Druids originated when the families of the earth were separated by the confusion of tongues at Babel; and journeying westward with their tribes, brought their oriental imagery, knowledge, and worship with them. If such were the case we can easily understand how it is that the Brahmins of India, the Chaldeans of Syria, the Persian Magi as well as the Druids, all seem to have the same foundation for the tenets of their religion. Our own Saxon Chronicle also, brings the first inhabitants of Britain from Armenia, possibly the country on the *eastern* side of the Caspian Sea; and it is said that the Ancient Celtic and the Ancient Chaldean, were in many respects the same language; certainly the custom of the Israelites and the early inhabitants of Britain with respect to the setting up of stones, were identical. The Druids in the records among the Bard's remains, are said to have derived their origin from 'the Ship of Dylau, the son of the Sea,' who survived with his single family when the world was drowned. In this we can plainly see Noah and the Ark, of Holy Writ. There



Modern Druids at Stonehenge, Aug 24., 1905.
Inside the Circle.

is another legend that "Hu the mighty, who first settled Britain, led his tribe from the summer country which is called Defrobani," (now Constantinople.) One of the Sagas tells us

"A num'rous race, fierce as the Eagle wild,
Were thy first settlers, Britain chief of Isles,
Clad in long dress : who could their might withstand?
For skill renown'd, they then were Europe's dread.

The etymology of their name is generally considered to have been rendered from Drus ; (*Greek, oak*) but the order was undoubtedly prior to that language, and is said by one writer to have been derived from a Hebrew word signifying 'Liberty.' Among other derivations given are these.

Hebrew —	Derussian	<i>i.e.</i>	people of contemplation,
Syrian —	Draoi	„	a magician,
Welsh —	Drud	„	the absolver of sins,
Persian —	Duru (or Daru)	„	a good and holy man,
Celtic Irish —	Druí	„	a magician.

The account which Cæsar gives in the sixth book of his Commentaries, of the Druids of Gaul &c, is marked with his usual clearness, and may be received without hesitation as a description of the Druids of Britain ; it is undoubtedly the foundation of every thing known with respect to their history. He says :—"In Gaul are the Druids, I was acquainted with Devitiacus Ædnuſ your host, and who spoke well of you. He professed to be master of the wisdom of nature, which the Greeks call *physiologia*, and, partly by auguries, partly by conjectures, told things which were to happen."

"Throughout all Gaul there are two orders of men who are of any rank and dignity : for the commonality is held almost in the condition of slaves, but of these two orders, one is that of the Druids, the other that of the Knights. The former are engaged in things sacred, conduct the public and the private sacrifices, and interpret all matters of religion. To these a large number of the young men resort for the purpose of instruction, and they, [the Druids] are in great honour among them. For they determine respecting almost all controversies, public and private ; and if any crime has been perpetrated, if murder has been committed, if there be any dispute about an inheritance, if any about boundaries, these same persons decide it ; they decree rewards and punishments ; if any one, either in a private or public capacity, has not submitted to their decision, they interdict him from the sacrifices. This among them is the most heavy punishment. Those who have been thus interdicted are esteemed in the number of the impious and the criminal : all shun them, and avoid their society and

conversation, lest they receive some evil from their contact ; nor is justice administered to them when seeking it, nor is any dignity bestowed on them. Over all these Druids one presides, who possesses supreme authority among them. Upon his death, if any individual among the rest is pre-eminent in dignity, he succeeds ; but, if there are many equal, the election is made by the suffrages of the Druids ; sometimes they even contend for the presidency with arms. These assemble at a fixed period of the year in a consecrated place in the territories of the Carnutes, which is reckoned the central region of the whole of Gaul. Hither all, who have disputes, assemble from every part, and submit to their decrees and determinations. This institution is supposed to have been devised in Britain, and to have been brought over from it into Gaul ; and now those who desire to gain a more accurate knowledge of that system generally proceed thither for the purpose of studying it."

"The Druids do not go to war, nor pay tribute together with the rest ; they have an exemption from military service and a dispensation in all matters. Induced by such great advantages, many embrace this profession of their own accord, and [many] are sent to it by their parents and relations. They are said there to learn by heart a great number of verses ; accordingly some remain in the course of training twenty years. Nor do they regard it lawful to commit these to writing, though in almost all other matters, in their public and private transactions, they use Greek characters. That practice they seem to me to have adopted for two reasons ; because they neither desire their doctrines to be divulged among the mass of the people, nor those who learn, to devote themselves the less to the efforts of memory, relying on writing ; since it generally occurs to most men, that, in their dependence on writing, they relax their diligence in learning thoroughly, and their employment of the memory."

"It is especially the object of the Druids to inculcate this—that souls do not perish, but after death pass into other bodies ; and they consider that by this belief more than anything else, men may be led to cast away the fear of death, and to become courageous. They discuss, moreover, many points concerning the heavenly bodies and their motion, the extent of the universe and the world, the nature of things, the influence and ability of the immortal gods ; and they instruct the youth in these things."

"The whole nation of the Gauls is much addicted to religious observances, and, on that account, those who are attacked by any of the more serious diseases, and those who are involved in the dangers of warfare, either offer human sacrifices or make a vow that they will offer them ; and they employ the Druids to officiate at these sacrifices ; for they consider that the favour of the immortal

gods cannot be conciliated unless the life of one man be offered up for that of another: they have also sacrifices of the same kind appointed on behalf of the state. Some have images of enormous size, the limbs of which they make of wicker-work, and fill with living men, and setting them on fire, the men are destroyed by the flames. They consider that the torture of those who have been taken in the commission of theft or open robbery, or in any crime, is more agreeable to the immortal gods; but when there is not a sufficient number of criminals, they scruple not to inflict this torture on the innocent."

"The chief deity whom they worship is Mercury; of him they have many images,* and they consider him to be the inventor of all arts, their guide in all their journeys, and that he has the greatest influence in the pursuit of wealth and the affairs of commerce. Next to him they worship Apollo and Mars, and Jupiter and Minerva; and nearly resemble other nations in their views respecting these, as that Apollo wards off diseases, that Minerva communicates the rudiments of manufactures and manual arts, that Jupiter is the ruler of the celestials, that Mars is the god of war. To Mars, when they have determined to engage in a pitched battle, they commonly devote whatever spoil they may take in the war. After the contest, they slay all living creatures that are found among the spoil; the other things they gather into one spot. In many states, heaps raised of these things in consecrated places may be seen: nor does it often happen that any one is so unscrupulous as to conceal at home any part of the spoil, or take it away when deposited; a very heavy punishment with torture is denounced against that crime."

"All the Gauls declare that they are descended from Father Dis (or Pluto), and this, they say, has been handed down by the Druids: for this reason, they distinguish all spaces of time not by the number of days, but of nights; they so regulate their birth-days, and the beginning of the months and years, that the days shall come after the night."

The priest-hood of the Celtic nations called in Britain and Gaul Druids, was divided into three orders, Druids proper, Bards and Eubages or Ovates. The first were men of the highest rank and authority; the Bards the second, and the Ovates or prophets the third. In each country one Arch Druid was at the head, and with him all authority rested. Although the people of Gaul sent their youth to Britain for education, there is nothing to show that the Arch Druid of Britain had any authority out of his own country; although undoubtedly according to Cæsar, the great centre of Druidism then was Britain.

*This does not seem to have been the case among the British Druids, we find no trace of images in any shape, their worship may have been a purer form than that of Gaul. (Ed.)



H. HURST, DEL.

An Arch Druid.

Not only had the Druids the regulation of all matters relating to religion, but they had the administration of justice both in civil as well as criminal matters ; and further than this, they were judges of merit and distributors of rewards. They obtained this power by their method of excommunication. If any one fell under their displeasure he was excluded from the sacrifices ; and being looked upon as impious and detestable, was shunned by all. As divination was then rife, and no observation could be taken but by them, they had by these means a control of every government, no important affair could be taken without their approbation ; for of course if they disapproved of anything, they took care that the auspices should be unfavourable, and then nothing could be done. The result was they ruled ; living in luxury and as much splendour as the times allowed. For instance, it is said they were attended in the performance of their judicial functions with great magnificence, sitting on thrones of Gold ; and were accustomed to be sumptuously entertained by Kings and Princes. In some cases like Melchizedek they united both Priest and King. This was the case with Divitiacus the Gaulish King of the *Ædui*, the friend of *Cæsar*.

The judicial dress of the Arch Druid was splendid and imposing. He was clothed in a stole of virgin-white over a closer robe fastened by a girdle on which appeared the crystal of augury encased in gold. Round his neck was the breast-plate of judgment and below was suspended the *Glain Neidr* or serpent jewel. He wore two rings, one plain, the other the chain ring of divination. As he stood beside the stone altar his hand rested on the *Elucidator* which consisted of several staves put into a frame which were turned at pleasure so that each stave represented a triplet. Pliny speaks of the celebrated symbol of Druidism, the *Glain*, which according to his account, is produced from serpents. The reptiles, twisting themselves together in great numbers, produced this egg, and then threw it up in the air with loud hisses, upon which the Druids who were on the watch, caught it in a cloak before it fell. They then fled on horseback until a river was crossed, pursuit there ceasing. I have seen the egg says Pliny, it is about the bigness of an apple, its shell full of little cavities, it is the badge of distinction which all the Druids wear.

Druids held the education of youth, and in the case of Bards possibly this was carried on for many years before completed. They were taken to secluded groves, to caves and rocky cairns, and were required to learn to repeat twenty thousand verses ; much of their religious services consisted of lines which they sung to their harps, and of these fragments still remain. In their discipline they were exceedingly strict, and the Arch Druid had power of life and death over wives, children and slaves. They instructed youth in many things relating to the Planets and their motions, and

Caius Sulpicius who acted as tribune of the soldiers in the Macedonian War, foretold the eclipse of the Moon to the Roman army. Astronomy and Geography seem to have been the particular department of the Ovates, who were the astrologers and magicians; it was their business to watch the wandering stars, the disposers of the affairs of men. They were the observers, they might be prophets, but the Arch Druid was the greatest prophet and worker of miracles.

The Druids were the sole depositaries of the laws; and among others, had a curious mode of trial by the oaths of a certain number of men, who were brought together to swear that they believed the man charged with an offence to be innocent. But before doing this, all the witnesses whom the prisoner could bring was examined by them, and the judge was bound to their decision. Thus we may fairly trace to them what is now trial by jury. Though not actual combatants they accompanied their countrymen to battle, and encouraged them with the expectation of future happiness if they fell. The account by Tacitus of the advance of the Romans to storm Mona their last stronghold is very forcible. The Druidesses are said to have acted like furies, running about among the soldiers with dishevelled hair, and even forcing them when retreating to return to the fight. The Druidesses were divided into three classes. Those who had vowed perpetual virginity, those who were married, often to Druids; and those who were servants and attendants on the Druids.

The Druids were the asserters of the liberty of their country; against the Romans they constantly excited their countrymen to fresh exertions, even after defeat. That was the true reason why the Roman general Suetonius was so embittered against them; so brave were they, that they were never entirely vanquished, but retreating into the fastnesses of the land, they there maintained their independence, making incursions on their enemies—and it was with their wild and beautiful poetry they deplored their country's misfortunes, or excited their heroes to the fight. Tacitus tells how Suetonius Paulinus prepared to invade Mona, "an island full of inhabitants and a retreat for fugitives. For this purpose he caused ships to be made with flat bottoms, for a steep uncertain shore. In these, the foot were conveyed over, the cavalry following by fording, in deep water, swimming and towing the horses. On the shore stood a motley troop of armed men mixed with women running up and down among them, dressed like furies in black garments, their hair dishevelled and torches in their hands. The Druids also attended, lifting up their hands to heaven, and uttering dreadful execrations. The novelty of the sight so struck the soldiers that they stood motionless, exposing themselves to the enemies' weapons, till animated by the exhortations of their general and encouraging one another not to fear an army of women and

madmen, they advanced, bore down all they met, and involved them in their own fire. Garrisons were afterwards placed in the towns, and the groves sacred to their superstition, cut down."

The Druids had considerable knowledge of, and were much addicted to the study of the qualities of vegetables, plants, and herbs. Vervain was among their greatest favourites, they used it in casting lots and foretelling future events, and also to anoint persons to prevent fevers &c., but it had to be gathered at a certain season of the year with special ceremonies. They deified the mistletoe; and when the end of the year approached, they marched with great solemnity to gather the mistletoe off the oak, in order to present it to their Gods; inviting all the world to assist at the ceremony. Pliny says:—The Druids (as the Gauls call their magicians or wise men,) hold nothing so sacred as the mistletoe and the tree on which it grows, providing it be an oak.

They made choice of oak groves in preference to all others; and performed no ceremonies without oak leaves, thinking whatever grows thereon is sent from Heaven, and is a sign that the Deity has chosen that tree. But as mistletoe is seldom to be met with on an oak, when found, it is fetched with great ceremony, on the sixth day of the Moon, which with them begins the month. They call this plant 'All Heal,' and after preparing for the sacrifice and feast under the tree, they bring two white bulls whose horns have been bound for the first time. The priest habited in white, mounts the tree; and with a golden hook cuts the mistletoe, which is received in a white cloth. Then they sacrifice, praying the Deity to render this his gift favourable, to those whom they distribute it. They suppose it renders every animal fruitful, and is a remedy against poison. The selago also, a kind of hedge hyssop, and the samolus or marsh-wort, they suppose to have great powers to prevent evils and cure diseases; these they gathered at particular times with great ceremonies.

The Druids may have known the art of making Gunpowder, or some kindred substance which was one of their mysteries, and by it, as the priests of Delphos also, created a storm of thunder and lightning in the face of the invaders of their temples. This is mentioned by Lucan. "Their grove is often shaken and strangely moved, and dreadful sounds are heard from its caverns; and it is sometimes in a blaze without being consumed." Ossian also compares "the sword of Oscar to the flame of the Druids."

The religion of the Druids in Britain, was more pure than that of Rome or Greece and threw their debased rites into the shade. It was patriarchal and too much like Christianity to be a hindrance to it, but rather the contrary. The philosophic doctrines of the Druids when stripped of corruptions, represented, if anything, the primitive religion of the oriental patriarchs, but their reverence

for fire, their hatred of images and their temples open to the sun, were precisely the same as those of the Persian Magi. In general they held the doctrines of Pythagoras, believing in a future state of rewards and punishments, in the immortality of the soul, and in its transmigration after death from one body to another.

The Elysium of the Celts was a real living life, with its bowls of mead, its strenuous combats, stone circles and human sacrifices. In the other world they would meet friend and foe and recognise and be recognised as upon the earth. There were three circles; the All-enclosing circle which contains the Deity alone; the circle of Felicity, the abode of good men, who have passed their terrestrial changes; and the circle of Evil through which mankind passes before being qualified to enter the circle of Felicity. All have three stages to pass through, the state of *Abred* (or *evil*) in the great Deep, the state of freedom in the human form, and the state of love, which is happiness, in the circle of Felicity. The Druidical belief in the future life, led them to bury with the dead, things useful to the living.

It was an article of the Druidical Creed, that nothing but the life of man could atone for the life of man; and this too, was also taught in the early days by Holy Writ. Although beasts were often sacrificed, their most solemn sacrifices were human beings, generally criminals, captives or strangers; but on extreme occasions even their own people. They held that man was above all, the most precious, and therefore the most grateful offering to God; and the dearer to them, the more acceptable they thought would be the sacrifice. We find traces of this in Abraham offering his son Isaac. And by the direction in which the body sacrificed fell, or the convulsion of the limbs and the flow of blood, they claimed to be able to foretell the future. One of the Druid sacrifices was still more monstrous, they are said to have made an image of wicker-work, which they filled with human beings, with wood, and several kinds of wild beasts; to which they set fire and consumed it at one holocaust. While performing these horrid rites, drums and trumpets were sounded without intermission; it being accounted ominous if cries or lamentations were heard, and when the entrails of the victims had been examined by the Diviners, the remains were consumed on the altar; drinking generally closed the sacrificing, and the altar was always consecrated afresh by strewing oak leaves upon it, before any other sacrifice could be again made. But we must receive this Roman account of the sacrificial practices of the Ancient Druids with some suspicion. Civilized communities have a natural tendency to exaggerate the horrors of superstitious observance among Barbarous nations.

It is quite possible that these barbarous rites were only performed on some extraordinary occasion, and one Roman writer

distinctly mentions this. The usual rites and ceremonies of the Druids were of a milder form distinctly contrary to these practices. The invasion of Britain and the slaughter of every Druid possible, may have led to retaliation on their foes. "It seems sad to point out," says a writer, "that wherever the priest-hood have ruled in ancient times; there human blood was shed. Long since the Druids, the Christian churches have not been without their martyrs; not always victims of heathen rites, but of dominant priest-craft; the Inquisition, the time of the English Reformation, and many others could be cited; and in Jewish history, it was the priest Caiaphas, not the heathen Pilate, who proposed the Crucifixion of Our Lord."

Sir W. Drummond points out:—The Chaldeans were an order of priests, and formed a class among themselves, the priest-hood did not go out of their families, they taught from father to son. Learning was confined to them. and they had made great advances in natural philosophy, mathematics and astronomy. They held that the order and beauty of the Universe, originated with Divine Providence, and that everything in the Heavens was accomplished by a pre-determined and decided judgement of the Gods. In all this we have the doctrines of the Druids. Ea among the Chaldeans was the God who is represented as having warned Manu of the approaching flood and directed the building of an ark.

The Pharoahs in Egypt claimed descent from the Sun as indeed do some Indian tribes at the present day, and each reigning King assumed divine honours when living; they were addressed officially as The King my Lord my Sun God, and after death were worshipped as deities—the Emperor of China at the present day is said to be the 'Son of the Sun of Heaven.' Even in Japan the Mikado is said to have descended from the sun goddess and is himself a divine being. The worship of the sun and moon was universal by the different nations; but it is so easy to understand how the veneration of the former, the life giver throughout the world, would only be a natural result in the absence of revelation.

Those who worshipped the Sun were those who also worshipped fire, and we can easily suppose that in the absence of the former, the latter would be adored as partaking of the same nature. Nor is sun worship at this day obsolete; for we find still, parts of the world in which the sun is adored.

Baal was the god supreme, he was called Hu by the Welsh. Bel, Beli, Belus, Belenus, Belin, Balen and Belans, are other names for the same God. His great festival was May 1. on which day, the Irish made great fires in his honour on the tops of hills, while the Baal May Day festival is still kept up in parts of Scotland, where Beltane Cakes are prepared and fired, or griddled, over a peat fire. The youngsters go with them to a hill, gather materials,

make a bonfire and in the ashes roast an egg ; which is eaten with the Cake.

The Gayatri, the most sacred text of the Veda, must not be uttered so as to be heard by profane ears ; it contains the essence of the Hindo's religion, with a short prayer to the Sun God, who is addressed as Savatri the creator—also worshipped by the early Egyptians as creator ; and 1500 years B.C. the Sun worshippers at the rising of the Sun, listened to the sacred songs chanted by their priests, and in the Vedas, the early Sun worshippers have recorded their sacred hymns. Sunrise it was, that inspired the first prayers of our race, and called forth the first sacrificial flames.

A Sun Prayer, at Dawn.

"Oh Sun ! in the most profound heaven thou shinest, Thou openest the door of heaven. Oh Sun ! towards the earth thou turnest thy face. Oh Sun ! thou spreadest above the surface the splendour of heaven."

"She rose up spreading far and wide and moving everywhere, she grew in brightness wearing her brilliant garment, the leader of the days, she shone gold-coloured, lovely to behold. Thou art a blessing, raise up wealth to thy worshipper thou mighty Dawn."

Thou disk of the sun, thou living God. There is none other beside thee. Thou givest health through thy beams, creator of all. Thou goest up in the heaven to dispense life to all, whom thou hast created ; thus they behold thee and go to sleep when thou settest."

The festival of the winter solstice (Christmas,) was celebrated by the Druids with great fires lighted on the hills, and the evergreens, particularly the mistletoe used at that time, betrays its Druidical origin. It was also a great festival with the Persians, who then celebrated the birth of their God, Mithra. On the twenty-fifth of December, at the first moment of the day, throughout the ancient world the birth of the god Sol was celebrated. It was the moment when, after the supposed winter solstice, he began to ascend.

Druidical justice executed on their judgement seat was, according to some testimony, bloody and terrible. The religious rites were debased with the fearful sacrifices of a cruel idolatry. But with all, there was a deep reverence for what was high and spiritual, not only were the Druids the instructors of youth, but the preservers and disseminators of science ; the proclaimers of an existence beyond this life ; idolaters, but nevertheless teaching higher and far nobler tenets than that which belong to the mere senses, with a patriotism and love of country, even to contempt of death, which was beyond anything we have amongst us even in these enlightened days. The substance of their religious system may be summed up in three precepts, to worship the Gods, to do no Evil, and to act with Courage. By some it was held that they had a secret doctrine for the initiated, and that doctrine was the belief in one God. Their veneration for groves of oak and for sacred fountains was an expression of that natural worship which

sees the source of all good in the beautiful forms with which the earth is clothed. The sun and moon regulated their festivals and formed part of their worship, but only part; and this perhaps stands out prominently in comparison with the tribes who worshipped only the heavenly bodies. The traces of their rites which still remain among us were tributes to the bounty of the All-giver, who alone could make the growth, the ripening, and the gathering of the fruits of the earth propitious. Degrading as their superstitions were, this idea operated upon their actions, and even perhaps laid the foundations in the past for the present cherished liberty of our land and people. But those who now would place self as the only foundation of the present; the amassing of riches and its glittering plating over vice and misery; they, ignorant of the past, and careless of the future, will only create a restless, turbulent democracy; not a high minded, generous, and devoted people such as we often pride ourselves to be.

The Circles and Groves, in association with the many religious rites and solemn decisions in connection with them, had without doubt a deep influence on the character of our rude forefathers; who not placing the sole end of their existence in the present, believed in a glorious future; but withal it is scarcely to be expected from the ruins left to us, that we shall ever be able to make out entirely in detail, the secret of these magical temples; which probably were intended from the first to be involved in mystery. The Druids themselves left no written explanation, and when we consider how easy it is in orally telling things to create a wrong impression, which would grow further from absolute truth as it passed from one to the other; we can understand that error was bound to creep in as time passed on.

Druidic Poetry: with Sagas rendered into English.

Taliesen and Merddhin (*Merlin*) were among the great British bards whose songs of the lore of the Druids were prominent in their age. To them and others we owe the preservation of a number of these Sagas.

"Flowing is their Bardic lay
A smoothness from the cauldron of *Awen*."

The Sacred cauldron spoken of, gave forth mystical songs; and when three drops from this vessel touched the lips of a Druid all futurity was displayed to his view.

"Let us taste the cauldron of Prydain, Tranquility round the sanctuary of the uneven number, and sovereign power extend. Our sanctuary embraces all precious mysteries, disgrace alone excludes from Bardic worship. It is wise to be zealous for the countrys'

defence, a foe to hostile aggression, but the support of the feeble in battle." "Rapidly moving in the Course of the sky, in Circles of uneven numbers, Druids and Bards unite in celebration."

"If ye are true Bards
Relate the great secrets
Of the world where we live,

There is a great monster
From Satan's foul city,
Who has made an inroad
'Twixt shallows and deep,

His mouth is as wide
As the mountain of *Mynnau*,
No Death can vanquish
Nor hand, nor a sword,
Nine hundred rocks-load
Is between his two paws,
His head has one eye
Bright as the blue ice.

Three fountains there are
In his hidden parts,
And flowing through him
Are the moistening horns,
Deivr Donwy, the giver of waters.

Three fountains there are
That spring from the deep.
One, the swell of salt tide,
When it mounteth aloft,
O'er fluctu'ing seas,
To replenish the streams.

The second so sweetly
Descendeth upon us,
Whenever it raineth
Through the air from above,

The third is which springs
Through the veins of the mountain,
A banquet from flinty rock
Sent by (the) King of Kings.

There are thus three fountains
 In the mountain of *Fuawn*,
 The city of *Gwarthawn*
 Is beneath the deep wave.

Know'st thou what thou art
 In the hour of thy sleep,
 A mere body, or soul,
 Or, a ray of pure light.
 O Skill'd son of harmony
 Why wilt thou not speak,
 Know'st thou where the night
 Waits the parting of day,
 Do'st thou know the token
 Of ev'ry leaf growing,
 Or what heaves the mountain,
 Or what holds the earth,
 Who illumines the soul,
 Who has seen, or who knows."?

The Mystic lore of the Druids and those songs which are full of their old mythology, date from the age subsequent to the times of Taliesen and Merddhin, when the ancient superstition of Druidism or some part of it was preserved in Wales without interruption and cherished by the Bards to the last period of the Welsh princes. The true or divine *Awen*, it is said, was possessed by Adam in Paradise but lost at the fall; it was again possessed by the Hebrew prophets, and was brought by the Cymry to Britain, where it was used by the Bards and Druids in praising God and in all good and wise things. In time it was lost through the wickedness of man, until the coming of Christ, when it was again restored. The Sagas often begin with an invocation as in the following.

I pray the Lord, the ruler of every place,
 He who sustains the Heav'ns, the Lord over all,
 He who made the waters and all things good,
 He who bestows every gift and all prosperity.

A giver of Mead is Maelgwn of Mona, and at his mead-board
 His mead-horns circulate wine of the right colour,
 The bee has collected it and has not used it,
 For the distilling of the luscious Mead praised be it above all
 The numerous creatures the earth has produced,
 God hath made it as a gift to man,
 The wise and the foolish both enjoy it.

I entreat the prince, the chief of a peaceful land,
 For the release of Elphin from banishment,
 He who has given me wine and ale and mead,
 And large powerful horses of beautiful shape,
 By the will of God if set free through respect, [peace,
 (There shall be,) Five times five hundred festivals in perfect
 Should Elphin the warrior possess thy confidence.

A single hour I shall not sleep to night,
 My harp it is a large one,
 Give! oh give me for my play, a taste of the Kittle.
 I shall not sing a song, nor laugh, nor kiss to-night,
 Before drinking the Mead of Christmas,
 Give! oh give me for my play, a taste of the Bowl.

The invention of the Brewing of Ale is by tradition said to have been made by the Druids. Here is a Saga which seems to record it.

The Song of the Ale.

He was a quick traveller
 Who harnessed the wind,
 How much did he soar
 Above noisy earth.

He shall steep it in water
 Until it doth sprout,
 He shall steep it again
 Until it be soft,
 And in time it be finished
 The delight of all men.

Let his vessels be clean
 His wort then be bright,
 And when there is song
 From the cellar bring ale,
 Place it before Kings
 In festivals bright.

Of all the good things,
 Ale is far the best,
 God hath given us.

Lucan in a noble passage in the first book of the *Pharsalia*, thus addresses the Druids,

“ You too, ye Bards ! whom sacred raptures fire,
 To chant your heroes to your country's lyre ;
 Who consecrate, in your immortal strain,
 Brave patriot souls, in righteous battle slain,
 Securely now the tuneful task renew,
 And noblest themes in deathless songs pursue.
 The Druids now, while arms are heard no more,
 Old mysteries and barbarous rites restore,
 A tribe who singular religion love,
 And haunt the lonely coverts of the grove.
 To these, and these of all mankind alone,
 The gods are sure revealed or sure unknown.
 If dying mortals' doom they sing aright,
 No ghosts descend to dwell in dreadful night ;
 No parting souls to grisly Pluto go,
 Nor seek the dreary silent shades below ;
 But forth they fly immortal in their kind,
 And other bodies in new worlds they find ;
 Thus life for ever runs its endless race,
 And like a line death but divides the space,
 A stop which can but for a moment last,
 A point between the future and the past.
 Thrice happy they beneath their northern skies,
 Who that worst fear—the fear of death—despise
 Hence they no cares for this frail being feel,
 But rush undaunted on the pointed steel ;
 Defy death's slighted power, and bravely scorn
 To spare that life which must so soon return.”



The last of the Ancient Druids.

A Legend of the Rollright Stones.

On Midsummer Day at sunrise, one of the great Festivals of the Ancient Druids' was held, on which morning, to an observer in the Centre of the Circle, the Sun rises directly over the King-stone.

He stood within the Circle, waiting the rising sun,
His youth had long since pass'd, his day was all but done,
His noble brow was crown'd with a wealth of snow white hair,
But his glance was like an eagle's, so fearless gaz'd he there.
His raiment white, was soil'd, with raging battle's fray,
The dawning light glanc'd o'er him, herald of coming day,
Above, the sky glow'd crimson, each cloud that floated there,
Shone gorgeous in the sunrise, and lit the scene so fair.

Far up upon the hill-top, away from haunts of men,
These massive stones were rear'd, but no one knoweth when,
A vast and open temple, a worship'd sun-lit shrine,
A gath'ring place of nations, when they in strength combine.

He stood within the Circle, by the altar's massive stone,
The sacrifice laid on it, but there he stood alone,
The only Ancient Druid, alive that morn to see,
The rest their lives had yielded, yet won the victory.
And as he stood expectant, the sun leap'd up and spread
His bright beams o'er the King-stone, upon the Druid's head,
They shone upon the altar, and from the sacred fire,
A brand he took and lighted the sacrificial pyre.
And as the smoke to Heav'n, tower'd up in scented wreath
The Druid low in anguish, bow'd down his head in grief,
Then rose again majestic, with tower'd form and tall,
His right hand raised o'er him, in deep prophetic thrall.
"Great Sun-God, thou, who givest life to all things here below,
Whose glance, omniscient, seest all our goings to and fro,
Thy brightness beams from Heav'n, on all our waiting race,
To thee we look, and worship, for thy vivifying grace.
Of all thy priests, I, only I, am left alive to-day,
The rest have fall'n! fall'n! in gory heaps lie they,
And my hours too are number'd, for life is ebbing slow,
Oh! grant me strength to finish my work before I go."

The sun still travell'd upward, and shone in splendour clear,
 Its rays illumed the worshipper, and lit the altar near,
 The sacrifice was ended, to ashes all had gone,
 And blood now stain'd the Druid's robe, and dripp'd upon the stone.

But some had seen the smoke arise, and hasten'd up the hill,
 They found the Druid failing, but by the altar still,
 Yet while they rallied round, in wonder and surprise,
 He seem'd fresh life to gather, before their eager eyes.
 Then pressing hard his wounded side, and pointing to the Sun,
 He bade them treasure up these last few words, from one
 Who never more on earth would see, the Sun-God rise again,
 But free from this world's travail, would endless life attain.
 "My children I am leaving you," he said, "but as I stand
 Upon the margin of the grave, I gaze o'er this fair land
 The future's clear before me, two thousand years or more
 And light beams bright and brighter upon old Britain's shore."

"I see in ages yet to come the children of our race
 Stand ever first and foremost, while they the right embrace,
 And closing up their serried ranks, against the nations all,
 Shall hap'ly rise victorious, while others downward fall.
 A queen is sitting on the throne, a mother to her land,
 And in her reign, pure happiness is seen on every hand,
 Her children follow in her steps, and win the world's release
 From many a direful misery, and pave the way for peace.
 Then helping in that glorious work, still Druids there will be,
 Who bind themselves together in pure philanthropy,
 The Noblest of our island race, with deeds, not words, they prove,
 They hold all men as brothers, in sympathy and love.
 And in that day our race shall rule, and gather to its side,
 The world's great men; and nations acknowledge none beside,
 For all men will be brothers, and wars and tumult cease,
One Universal Brotherhood. A Thousand Years of Peace."

But as in trumpet tones, his words thus rang through every breast,
 The Druid sank upon the stone, and found—eternal rest,
 Those round him, rais'd him up, to find his last words said,
 Then laid him sadly down again, upon the stony bed.
 And while the spell thrown o'er them, still held them in its thrall
 They vow'd to spread the tidings, to reach each one and all.
 While through each true heart ringing, its echo ne'er will cease.
One Universal Brotherhood, A Thousand Years of Peace.

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